L O C A L H E R O

Second Draft Screenplay

by

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"... What is this life if full of care

We have no time to stand and stare..."

William Henry Davies

SCENE ONE

HOUSTON TEXAS. KNOX OIL AND GAS INDUSTRIES. BOARDROOM. DAY INTERIOR.

Except that the lights are out and the automated blinds are drawn.

The KNOX OIL EXECUTIVE BOARD are watching a documentary film about oil development in the North Sea. A documentary is a film without any girls in it.

To begin with the documentary images fill our screen also. The film is reaching its end with a summing-up montage of oil wells and floating platforms and heaving ocean waves.

The commentary attempts to hold these images together. The music attempts to drown out the commentary.

COMMENTARY

... and the pioneering technology that needs the oil finds the oil... from field studies to production in four years flat... that's the kind of pace the world demands, and the kind that Knox responds to... Nature guards her treasures jealously... just a decade ago these fields were beyond our reach... we didn't have the technology... today a Knox engineer will tell you that he might need a little time, but he'll get the oil... he knows that a little time is all that we have left...

The documentary music swells and at last triumphs over the commentary. We hold on the film until the KNOX OIL logo fixes on the screen.

At last there is silence, and the lights go up in the boardroom. The silence is not total. There is the sound of the uninhibited snoring of MR HAPPER. HAPPER doesn't have to be inhibited because he owns the boardroom, and the building, and the film we have just seen, and the dozen or so people sitting around him. So he keeps on with his snoring.

Nobody in the room seems to be intimate enough with him to be able to give him a nudge. The film projector and screen are being noislessly removed from the room by a couple of tiptoe-ing technicians.

The rest of them sit in impotent silence. It becomes more tense when the coffee cup in HAPPER'S hand slowly escapes from his relaxing grip and thuds to the floor. The black sugary fluid spills onto the carpet and resembles a miniature oil slick as it lies on top of the thick nylon pile. HAPPER sleeps on.

The situation is resolved when HAPPER'S PERSONAL SECRETARY, MRS WYATT enters the room. She is obviously the second most

SCENE ONE continued

important person in the room. She proves it by giving HAPPER a vigorous shake. We can almost hear the rest of them wince.

HAPPER comes awake, and is quickly alert.

HAPPER

Apologies gentlemen. I was up all night.

One of the younger aides seems determined to overcome his timidity before the others.

AIDE

I liked the human dimension at the end Mr Happer... very human ending... good angle.

HAPPER looks at him blankly

HAPPER

What?

AIDE

The movie sir... it was very human.

HAPPER looks around the room. There is no trace of a movie. The man is talking in absolute riddles.

HAPPER ignores him and addresses another more senior AIDE.

HAPPER

Let's get on with business Crabbe, we don't have time to waste... what's next?

CRABBE takes control of the meeting.

CRABBE

Thank you Mr Happer... the main business today gentlemen is the report on the progress of our acquisition of Scotland... well, part of Scotland, for the refinery and storage base. I've got some things to show you.

CRABBE moves to a wall covered in charts and data, and a simplified map of Scotland which show the essential features that crop up in his briefing.

CRABBE

You know that we've got a two year lead in North Atlantic development... we can double

SCENE ONE continued

CRABBE continued

that if we streamline the processing end of things onshore... The pipeline is well on the way... and we have the site for the terminal right here. Allow four years for construction and Knox will be the sole producer of Atlantic Oil... Total investment is six hundred million spread over the next three fiscals... this will include the two hundred million ten year loan from Knox Financial. Knox Real Estate will have equity holding on the site and construction... so it's one hundred per cent in the family...

Another board member, FOUNTAIN, chimes in. Now that HAPPER is snoring again everyone is more at their ease.

FOUNTAIN

What about the site acquisition?

CRABBE

It's critical. The survey teams have found just about the only bay on the entire coast that's got solid enough bedrock... most of the rest is sedimentary stuff that would add two years to construction... This is the bay here... we have British Government approvals, and they're even going to put a new road up the coast here for us, financed by a thirty year loan from Knox European...

FOUNTAIN

What does Donaldson say?

CRABBE

It's built in to the three year projections already... We've got to buy...

He consults his notes

CRABBE

... Ferness for fifty million dollars... I think we should put a negotiator on the site right away... we're dealing with close and stable allies of the US, not to mention the links historically between Knox Oil and Scotland... we're not in a third world situation here... There's a whole area of public relations that we should invest in... we need the human dimension to swing this one...

SCENE ONE continued

As he speaks we move in on the map. The blot of colour that represents the bay becomes more distinct. We see the name beside it... FERNESS.

SCENE TWO

FERNESS. SCOTLAND. THE OFFICE OF URQUHART. DAY.

Another business meeting is in progress, but this time the talk is on a very different scale. URQUHART is the local accountant, and FRASER, a fisherman, is one of his clients.

URQUHART

How much is the new net?

FRASER

A lot. Over a hundred pounds.

URQUHART

You need to lose more than that. You've got to buy things... I can't make money vanish into thin air, not all of it anyway ... it's got to *go* somewhere... otherwise pay the tax.

We can sense that URQUHART enjoys his work, appreciates its intricacies.

URQUHART

Spend money...

FRASER

I don't want to.

URQUHART thinks.

URQUHART

Buy a new boat... I'll get you a fifty per cent write-off on the old one and a hundred per cent allowance on the new one... if it happens before the end of July. Otherwise give it to the taxman, or keep it in that tobacco jar of yours until it rots away.

FRASER

It's a watertight jar.

SCENE TWO continued

URQUHART

Yeh, but it still lets inflation in... do something before July... ok?

FRASER

Ok.

FRASER makes to go. URQUHART escorts him from the room.

SCENE THREE

FERNESS VILLAGE. EXTERIOR. DAY.

URQUHART is walking with FRASER to the small jetty in front of the house.

THE VILLAGE is a single road running along the foreshore, with about fifteen houses on the entire front.

It is a fresh spring-like day. The two men walk out along the jetty and FRASER prepares to leave in his fifteen foot open decked creel boat. They loiter on the jetty for a moment or two. URQUHART wants to say something.

URQUHART

That was thirty-five minutes.

FRASER looks at him questioningly

URQUHART

We discussed your financial affairs for thirty-five minutes...

FRASER gets the message.

FRASER

How much?

URQUHART

It's still only fifteen pounds an hour.

FRASER reluctantly digs into his pocket.

FRASER

So that's...

SCENE THREE continued

URQUHART

Eight pounds seventy-five pence. Not including the walk, I'll throw that in.

FRASER peels off a couple of five pound notes from the wad in his pocket. URQUHART gives him change of one pound. The transaction takes place in a casual way. They take in the morning, the bay, the sky, but they don't look at each other.

URQUHART

I'm short of the twenty-five pence...

FRASER looks hurt and cheated

URQUHART

You can talk to me for another minute if you like...

FRASER knows he's been taken. He gets into his boat and sets off across the bay.

URQUHART walks back to his house. He passes a boat which is pulled up onto the foreshore. It is a twenty foot decked fishing boat, painted red. A man, GIDEON, is painting a name on the bow. He is calling it the "BELLA MARGEURITA".

URQUHART greets GIDEON as he passes.

SCENE FOUR

THE URQUHART HOUSE. DAY INTERIOR.

URQUHART comes back into his office and settles down at his desk. A voice hails him from the hallway. It is his wife STELLA.

STELLA

Coffee!

She enters the room. She is very attractive in a wifely, comfortable kind of way. She puts the coffee cup on the table.

URQUHART

Ta.

They don't seem to talk a lot. She loiters in the room, humming a tune to herself. They look at each other and

SCENE FOUR continued

smile. She stops humming. Something seems to be building up between them.

She makes to leave the room, but URQUHART calls her back as she reaches the hallway.

URQUHART

Stella?

She comes back into the room.

URQUHART

Come here.

He stands up. They meet in the middle of the room and embrace. They quickly heat up and kiss and claw each other onto the floor.

URQUHART and STELLA are the most compatible married couple on the face of the earth. They are amazing.

SCENE FIVE

KNOX OIL AND GAS. HOUSTON. TEXAS.

FOUNTAIN is interviewing a younger man in his office. This man is MACINTYRE from the Legal Department. He is being briefed for the Scottish assignment.

FOUNTAIN

... It's not just an acquisition job, Macintyre... there's a whole load of public relations involved too... you know we're in pretty deep with the British Government right now... big investments, loans, the works.

MAC

Uh-huh... but do I really have to go there? I'm more of a telex man... I could fix the deals in an afternoon on the telex... like with Mexico last year...

FOUNTAIN

It's not like Mexico Macintyre... we're dealing with... people like ourselves... you're a Scot... you're dealing with your own people... that's why you're going... you won't be dealing with a bunch of indians.

SCENE SIX

KNOX OIL AND GAS. SEVENTEENTH FLOOR.

MAC is walking along the corridor with his friend from the office CALVIN WRAIN.

MAC

I think I should tell Fountain I'm not a Scotchman...

CAL

Don't spoil the fun... take the trip.

MAC

Forty million bucks to spend... it could be fun...

CAL

How come you're not a Scotchman Mac?

MAC

My folks changed their name when they came off the boat from Hungary. They thought Macintyre was American! My real name's a bitch of a name. I can't even say it...

CAL

My folks were called Rainwater... way back... but they decided to shake off the Red Indian connection... so they dropped the "water" and stuck a "W" at the front... that's how I got to be Calvin Wrain the third...

MAC

Well Mr Rainwater, will you look after Africa for me while I'm gone.

CAL

All of Africa?

MAC

Just the west coast deals... Sarah has the file... we've got the Congo Development Minister's tit in the wringer... squeeze another five per cent of the crude oil gross from him and we can sign the deal for all three territories... plus we want the tanker franchise... a couple of telexes should take care of it... put a five day deadline on it and you'll have him by the coconuts. Give me a dime, I want the chilli special.

SCENE SIX continued

By now they have arrived at a food dispensing machine at the end of the corridor. For a few silver coins and the punch of a button it will heat up the contents of the can of your choice in a few micro-seconds. Once the scalding can is ejected from the machine you are on your own. Maybe Evolution is already at work on asbestos hands for office workers.

CAL gives the food machine an expert thump with his elbow and it delivers their hot cans of junk food. MAC'S can of chilli splurts scalding red fluid when he opens it.

SCENE SEVEN

HAPPER TOWER. PENTHOUSE. DAY.

HAPPER lives and works here, at the top of the KNOX OIL AND GAS BUILDING.

We find him seated behind his ten thousand dollar desk. The view beyond the expansive windows creates the impression that the room is suspended somewhere in the stratosphere. This impression suits HAPPER down to the ground.

HAPPER is silent during most of this scene, because he is being talked to, or more correctly talked at. A youngish cleanish executive type person is seated casually at the far side of the monstrous desk.

He doesn't appear to be in the least intimidated by HAPPER, which is unusual in this building. He speaks freely and in his own time. His name is MORITZ.

MORITZ

All I see is failure Happer... that's all I see...

HAPPER takes this remark in silence.

MORITZ

You sit here with your head in the clouds practically, and you make... what... five million dollars a week?

HAPPER nods affirmative

HAPPER

Gross

SCENE SEVEN continued

MORITZ

Ok, gross... and guess what... you're a flop Happer... you make me want to laugh... no, you make me want to cry, that's what you make me want to do...

HAPPER shifts in his seat and lowers his head

MORITZ

Even with two billion dollars you can't make a right move... what have you achieved with all that money and power... eh?

HAPPER sits on in silence

MORITZ

Well, we've got the Happer Tower right here, and Happer Boulevard outside... and the Happer Institute at the University... and the Happer Science Foundation... that name sure keeps cropping up doesn't it... and let's not forget the Happer Observatories, no sir ... a fifty million dollar toy... for a sad flop of a man...

HAPPER attempts a half-hearted defence

HAPPER

Astronomy is a key science.

MORITZ scoffs

MORITZ

Key to whom Happer? Key to Happer maybe? You're on a huge ego trip, and you want to drag the whole universe in on it... tell me about your Comet Project... go on... make me laugh...

HAPPER reluctantly stirs himself

HAPPER

It's a surveillance project... looking for a new comet, that's all...

MORITZ mocks

MORITZ

Private observatories on three continents, that's all!

SCENE SEVEN continued

HAPPER

Comets are important. They could hold the key to the universe... maybe...

MORITZ

And what are you going to call this Comet if and when you find it Happer?

HAPPER attempts to be sheepish, but there is a sense of swelling ego as he speaks.

HAPPER

The Happer Comet... or Happer's Comet... or Comet Happer...

MORITZ is triumphant, and still mocking.

MORITZ

I thought it might be! The whole world will weep with gratitude Happer, when the big day comes! Mr Happer's got a Comet... hurray! What an empty, hollow wasteful activity.

MORITZ changes his tone

MORITZ

You're chasing Comets around the sky... is your life around you so... complete? What about a wife, children... a family? Are these human goals too simple for you?

HAPPER bangs the desk

HAPPER

Get out Moritz, that's enough for today. I have some meetings soon... get out.

MORITZ changes in an instant. He becomes a sycophantic toad. Even his posture changes. He seems to shrink into the seat.

MORITZ

Yes sir Mr Happer. It seemed to go well today, didn't it sir?

HAPPER

It was ok Moritz.

SCENE SEVEN continued

MORITZ

I hope you'll let me be of further abuse to you sir... in fact I think we should build up the sessions, maybe two or three a week, at the same fee of course... we're at a crucial stage...

HAPPER

Check with Mrs Wyatt on the way out... fix a half hour for Friday.

HAPPER is dismissing him in quick time. MORITZ hovers fawningly at the door.

MORITZ

Maybe I could give you a kind of abusive 'phone call some night Mr Happer... any time that's inconvenient. The surprise element might do a lot of good. I mean harm...

HAPPER

Get out.

MORITZ gives a few parting gestures of subservience. He pulls the door behind him.

HAPPER

Moritz!

MORITZ'S head re-appears at the door

HAPPER

Did you mean any of that stuff, about me being a flop?

MORITZ is horrified at the thought

MORITZ

God no Mr Happer! It's basic therapy technique... sometimes I get carried away...

HAPPER is still concerned, looking for real help

HAPPER

D'you think if I had married, things would be... different?

This is taking MORITZ very nearly out of his depth as a therapist. He tries to busk it.

MORITZ

By no means Mr Happer. The modern world offers many alternatives to the security of the family unit...

MORITZ winces. He shouldn't have brought up the idea of security. Then he gets some more inspiration.

MORITZ

Look at me Mr Happer... I'm a single man...

MORITZ'S example of himself does nothing to inspire HAPPER

HAPPER

Get out.

MORITZ leaves the room

The humiliation therapy seems to have done the trick for another day or so, and HAPPER takes command of his ego and his empire once more.

He calls his SECRETARY on the intercom.

HAPPER

Mrs Wyatt, who are we sending to Scotland on the refinery deal?

MRS WYATT

Mr Crabbe has selected Mr Macintyre of Acquisitions for the trip sir. His Scottish connections seem to fit the bill, and he handled Mexico pretty well last year.

HAPPER

I remember Mexico. Tell Macintyre I want to see him before he leaves.

MRS WYATT

Yes sir.

SCENE EIGHT

MAC AND CAL'S OFFICE.

MAC has obviously just had the summons. He is dancing around the office, pulling on his jacket, fixing his hair.

SCENE EIGHT continued

CAL watches him coolly.

CAL

You've got chilli on your tie.

MAC rushes at CAL and pulls his tie from his neck without taking the knot out. CAL doesn't offer any resistence and accepts MAC'S soiled tie in return.

MAC rushes out of the office.

MAC

I get to ride the express elevator too!

SCENE NINE

MAC is riding in the express elevator, which is only used by HAPPER and the few who are being taken to his presence.

We can see MAC appreciating the superior ride of the express, this Rolls Royce of elevator cars. There is even a liveried elevator hop standing discreetly by the controls.

The elevator hop gets the upper hand, like they always do.

ELEVATOR MAN

There's spaghetti sauce on your tie sir.

MAC spots it and starts to rub vigorously.

SCENE TEN

THE HAPPER PENTHOUSE.

MAC emerges from the elevator. His first glimpse of the far side of the other side of the tracks. The other side of the universe more like. The place is like an Astronomical Museum. Ancient telescopes on antique tripods, huge globes of the heavens, charts of star systems, planetary models suspended on invisible threads, a blue subdued lighting effect.

The thick carpeting deadens the sound ambience.

MAC is awestruck. He makes his way along the soundless corridor towards the area of light that is the post of MRS WYATT.

He approaches her.

SCENE TEN continued

MRS WYATT

Take a seat Mr Macintyre.

She is the second most important person in Houston.

MAC sits down without a murmur.

One of MRS WYATT'S telephones gives a superior burble of a tone. She answers it.

[redacted]

[redacted]

MRS WYATT

Thank you.

She presses a button on her intercom system.

MRS WYATT

I have the Prime Minister for you now Mr Happer... hold on... Mr Happer ma'am... yes I did ma'am, I tried it with raspberries... It was delicious, although I only had frozen, yes ma'am... here's Mr Happer now... goodbye.

She puts down the phone.

MAC fidgets. He straightens his tie, as if in deference to the illustrious company he has joined via the telephone.

MAC

Excuse me, is there a wash room?

MRS WYATT

Behind you Mr Macintyre. Don't be long.

MAC heads for the refuge of the toilet.

SCENE ELEVEN

THE HAPPER TOILET.

MAC ablutes himself. Hands, face, hair and tie. He tries to remove the last of the spaghetti sauce, leaving a damp / much worse stain in its place.

He still has to dry his hands when the telephone on the basin ledge rings.

MAC picks it up instinctively.

MAC

Macintyre... washroom...

MRS WYATT

Mr Macintyre, will you please join Mr Happer now... he is waiting for you...

MAC

I'll talk to him on the 'phone if he's in a hurry...

MRS WYATT

Please come now Mr Macintyre...

MAC exits the toilet rapidly.

SCENE TWELVE

MAC passes through MRS WYATT'S empire and is pointed in the direction of HAPPER'S OFFICE. He enters.

SCENE THIRTEEN

HAPPER'S OFFICE.

HAPPER is behind his eleven thousand dollar desk. Antiques appreciate.

MAC

Macintyre sir. Pleased to meet you.

MAC moves to a position in front of the big desk and remains standing.

HAPPER

You're going to Scotland Macintyre.

SCENE THIRTEEN continued

MAC can't deny it

MAC

Yes sir.

HAPPER

It's like going home, like we're going home, eh Macintyre?

What passes as a smile crosses HAPPER'S face. MAC smiles back, but doesn't engage in an answer.

HAPPER

The founder of all this was a Scot... Alexander Knox...

HAPPER'S eyes have wandered towards an oil painting on the wall, one of the few things in the room that doesn't seem to relate to the cosmos.

A stern semi-victorian gent stares out from the canvas. He looks like either a baptist preacher or a millionaire, possibly both.

MAC presumes that it is our MR KNOX, and makes suitable guestures of appreciation.

HAPPER

That's not him, that's my father. He bought Knox out in 1912... would've been handy if he'd thought to change the company name at the same time... but...

HAPPER dwells on this thought privately for a moment.

HAPPER

Anyway, you are going to Scotland... the old country...

MAC

Yes sir.

HAPPER

Virgo is well up this time of year...

HAPPER sits back in his chair, to assess the impact of this statement. MAC fails him.

MAC

Sir?

SCENE THIRTEEN continued

HAPPER

I'm talking about the sky Macintyre... the constellation of Virgo is prominant in the sky right now... in Scotland...

MAC still doesn't know which way to jump. He stays silent.

HAPPER

I want you to keep an eye on Virgo for me. Will you do that?

MAC is very confused. HAPPER has to take some action. He presses a button on his desk. With a low hum the ceiling above them parts in the middle and slides open. At the same time the automatic blinds on the windows start to close. the room grows dim.

Beyond the parting ceiling it seems there is the universe itself, a night sky, a dark deep night sky. MAC can almost sense the chill in the air.

This is HAPPER'S own planetarium. He walks MAC over to the best viewpoint. MAC'S eyes are wide open, like a child's.

HAPPER

This is Virgo. Find the Great Bear, the Big Dipper, and you can't go wrong. Get to know it... I'm expecting something special there. Keep your eyes skinned. I want reports.

MAC

Reports sir?

HAPPER

Anything unusual in Virgo... it might look like a new star, even a shooting star, I want to know about it... I want reports... anything out of the ordinary you phone me, night or day. This is my private number. You're travelling six hours east of here... you'll be ahead... think of that!

He hands MAC his card.

HAPPER

You know what I'm talking about?

MAC

I have a general...

SCENE THIRTEEN continued

HAPPER

You'll know when you see it. And you'll telephone me. Ok?

HAPPER goes back to his chair. MAC still seems confused.

HAPPER

You know what a comet is don't you?

MAC soldiers on bravely.

MAC

I feel sure that I'd know one... if I saw one...

HAPPER

And you'd 'phone me...

MAC

I'd 'phone you sir.

This committment cheers HAPPER immensely

HAPPER

Good man... you've got the picture.

And that seems to be that.

HAPPER

The Northern Sky is a very beautiful thing Macintosh... you're going to have a wonderful trip.

MAC

Thank you sir.

MAC backs out of the room, a little in the manner of someone who has been humouring a mad axeman for a couple of hours.

SCENE FOURTEEN

MRS WYATT'S OFFICE.

MAC is just about to creep past her and head for the more sane world of the seventeenth floor. Then HAPPER calls him.

SCENE FOURTEEN continued

HAPPER

Macintosh!

Despite losing some face by answering to the wrong name, MAC doubles back into HAPPER'S DEN.

SCENE FIFTEEN

HAPPER'S OFFICE.

MAC opens the door again.

MAC

Sir?

HAPPER

You a married man?

MAC

No sir. But I date girls...

HAPPER

I'm not married either... but I used to date girls too.

MAC

Thank you sir.

MAC backs off again and closes the door. HAPPER shouts a parting word.

HAPPER

Virgo!

SCENE SIXTEEN

HOUSTON EXTERIOR. EVENING.

The freeways and the downtown commercial blocks look their best at this time of day, but the manic activity of the going-home traffic adds a touch of looniness to the scene.

So does MAC. He is driving at great speed in his Porsche. He drives with the car stereo system at full volume, the sounds of the music drowning out all others.

SCENE SIXTEEN continued

We follow MAC'S progress home through the mad glamour of the twilit city.

SCENE SEVENTEEN

MAC'S HOME. INTERIOR. EVENING.

MAC is preparing for his trip, packing his suitcase and de-frosting the refridgerator. From his packing we can tell that he is, like Dick Diver, fond of "light mechanical devices", and also light electronic ones. He packs his miniature cassette machine and his instant camera.

MAC is dressed rather oddly. He seems to be experimenting with his "Texan" image, and has gone overboard on the ten gallon hat end of the style.

In some parts of the world MAC might be considered tall. In Japan for instance. In Japan he might even be called "BIG MAC". But for a Texan, he is on the short side.

MAC stands in front of the mirror and attempts to find the optimum angle of tilt for his hat. He gives a tug at his snake tie, and shifts his shoulders inside his cowboy's Sunday best jacket. He seems unsure of the total effect.

MAC is restless. He paces up and down the apartment, not really getting on with much packing or housework. His place is in the current Playboy Executive mode, laden with sound reproduction equipment and home video and other gadgets.

When in doubt MAC'S solution is to make a phone call. This he does.

MAC

Hello... can I speak with Trudi please? No it's not... it's Mac... she knows... no Mac... M... A... C...

He waits for a few moments. When he next speaks his voice is softer.

MAC

Hello there. How are you? Good. I'm terrific too... Sure... I won't keep you... it's just that I have to leave town for a while, and you have some things here still... well, some mail, three letters... they've been here for a while I'm afraid... well, what else is just your cigarette lighter,

SCENE SEVENTEEN continued

MAC continued

the English one... I thought you might be missing that... no, it's not important, if you can live without it... listen, there was something else... you remember my camera case... the one you kept your make-up in... can I have it back?... No it's not why I phoned... I only thought that... no, that's not true... I don't want to argue Trudi... well you're a thief then aren't you, a kleptomaniac... you're a pervert... you should see a doctor... you're a devient... thief!

He bangs the phone down. He is angry and desolate, and the Gene Autrey outfit doesn't help the image. He takes some giant Japanese steps up and down the room.

MAC calms himself by making another 'phone call. This one has more pep and authority to it.

MAC

Lester? It's Macintyre. Listen, I'm leaving town for a while... I want you to take in the Porsche and fix the suspension... just a couple of inches... yeh... and look at the fuel injection too... and I want the 145 plugs back on... and check the dif too, I'm losing some tread on the nearside...

MAC'S doorbell rings. He cuts short his 'phone call.

MAC

Lester, I have to go... I'll leave a list in the car... and you don't have to test drive it all the way to New Orleans and back ok? So long.

[redacted]

SCENE EIGHTEEN (page 23 deleted)

ABERDEEN AIRPORT. SCOTLAND. DAY.

At first glance the place looks like back-home HOUSTON. There is a continual flow of oil people in and out of the city. The airport also serves as a base for the chopper services that shuttle back and forth between the deep sea oil rigs.

Even the non-Americans affect the costume; denims, western boots and hats, expensive weather-proof clothing, no nonsense luggage. It is a hard working airport.

Among the crowd is DANNY OLDSEN. He is the local KNOX OIL representative. He is in his early twenties and bears a passing resemblance to his fictional cousin Jimmy Olsen, except our OLDSEN has a dirtier mind.

OLDSEN is keen but a bit on the raw side. For example, although he is equipped with a standard issue KNOX OIL AND GAS hand sign, to facilitate his meeting with MAC, he keeps the sign under his coat. He has been primed by his superiors on the delicacy of the whole FERNESS business, and is playing things close to his chest, literally.

The arrival of MAC'S flight is announced.

ANNOUNCER

We announce the arrival of domestic flight 804 from London, connecting with services from Dallas and Houston. The flight will be unboarding at gate four on schedule. We apologise for any inconvenience.

OLDSEN takes up a position at the gate and scans the faces.

More oil types spill out onto the concourse. OLDSEN makes an attempt to catch the eye of one or two of them, fingering the KNOX OIL sign under his coat, but he doesn't find his man.

Eventually the crowd thins out, with only OLDSEN and a luggage-laden MAC hanging around. MAC makes a move first. He looks across at OLDSEN with an enquiring expression.

OLDSEN pulls the corner of the KNOX OIL sign from his coat, revealing the 'K' and the 'N' to MAC. They approach one another.

MAC

My name is Macintyre, Knox Oil and Gas Houston... are you?

OLDSEN

Oldsen, yes! Knox Oil and Gas Aberdeen.

SCENE EIGHTEEN continued

OLDSEN fingers the sign under his coat.

OLDSEN

I didn't want to make a fuss. I know how delicate this business is.

There is a hint of irritation in MAC even this early in their relationship.

MAC

You have a car?

OLDSEN

Sure!

MAC

And you'll take me to the Laboratory?

OLDSEN

Yeh!

MAC

Well let's go.

OLDSEN makes an effort to help MAC with his luggage as they leave the concourse.

SCENE NINETEEN

KNOX OIL AND GAS LABORATORIES. OCEANOGRAPHY AND HYDROGRAPHY A SPECIALITY.

This is the headquarters of KNOX OIL'S research projects, studying the seas and ocean floors that they have to rescue their crude oil from.

The main feature of the place is a massive water tank which is used to simulate sea and wave conditions. Computer controlled paddles can agitate the water into any desired state, from a tidal ripple to scaled-down hundred foot waves.

One man controls the research work of the tank. He is in large measure responsible for the selection of FERNESS as the site for the refinery. His name is GEDDES.

GEDDES is wrapped up in his artificial world, run by numbers. He prefers to simulate events on his computer rather than experiment in the real world. He has never

SCENE NINETEEN continued

visited the real FERNESS, but knows it intimately as an analog version of itself. GEDDES inhabits a planet of his own.

MAC and OLDSEN enter the main tank room.

GEDDES

Close the door! Natural light harms my planctons!

GEDDES indicates some greenish slime that is growing in a shallow water-filled tray under the glare of blue lights.

GEDDES

I grew that stuff from four single cells and three million volts of direct current. I don't need any daylight screwing it up.

MAC and OLDSEN advance towards him.

OLDSEN

Doctor Geddes this is Mac... Macintyre.

MAC

Macintyre, Houston. Glad to know you.

GEDDES

Welcome to our little world Macintyre... You want to see the bay?

There is something secretive in GEDDES' manner. Only now do MAC and OLDSEN notice another person in the Lab. This is MARINA.

MARINA is dressed in a white laboratory coat. It lends her something of the manner and attractiveness of a lady doctor or physiotherapist. Not that MARINA needs to borrow a great deal. Her long dark curls only partially obscure the perfect Celtic beauty of her face. She is that provocative blend of softness and self-assertiveness that is the speciality of Celtic womanhood.

There might just be a hint of the Iberian in her particular beauty. The foundering Spanish Armada left many hundreds of its waterlogged sons up and down the coat of Scotland, and most of them stuck around and did well enough.

GEDDES motions MAC and OLDSEN further into his lab. MARINA goes with them. She is introduced as they walk.

GEDDES

Marina... this is Mr Macintyre... and Mr...

SCENE NINETEEN continued

OLDSEN

Oldsen! Danny! Hello!

OLDSEN is obviously smitten already.

GEDDES

They're Knox people. I want to show them some tidal simulations of... the bay.

By now they are at the control console beside the huge experimental tank. It is like a swimming pool with glass sides. The near end has been modelled with plaster and sand to represent a bay, complete in all its features, with a rocky coastline, a fine inner sandy bay, and on the far side a cliffy promintory. Even houses and farms are modelled in fine detail on the shoreline. It is an exact replica of FERNESS.

Underneath the water the seabed features are perfectly modelled, sloping gently away to the outer depths of the tank. Around the other three sides of the tank are the agitating panels operated by wires and pulleys and able to move in infinite combinations, like a giant row of yellow piano keys, waiting for an equally giant Tom or Jerry to dance on them.

GEDDES

We can simulate any sea condition you care to mention... what would you like?

OLDSEN

A hurricane?

GEDDES

I'll give you a force nine gale with a running tide.

He places a programmed cassette into the computer, and the agitators immediately stir themselves into action.

The water is quickly whipped up into a miniature storm, Lilliputian waves crashing onto the shore.

MAC and OLDSEN are enjoying it. GEDDES and MARINA are busy checking out readings on the console.

GEDDES

What d'you think?

MARINA

The sensor on forty one's gone haywire. I better replace it.

SCENE NINETEEN continued

GEDDES flicks a switch to still the agitators. MARINA is already climbing onto the catwalk that straddles the tank. Without a flicker of self-consciousness she removes her white coat revealing only a purposeful black bikini underneath.

OLDSEN catches his breath.

MARINA dives into the water. There is hardly a splash. The water seems to part in front of her to ease her entry.

She remains submerged. Her watery shape can be seen through the glass as she locates the mischievous sensor on the seabed.

She has been under the surface for some time now. MAC and OLDSEN show some concern. GEDDES only smiles.

GEDDES

She's got a magnificent pair of lungs... She's a real asset... five degrees in oceanography too, and a talented programmer.

OLDSEN

She's very talented, I would say...

Even MAC is moved a little.

MAC

Good skin...

GEDDES

I'll get rid of her when she surfaces.

MAC and OLDSEN wonder why. Just then MARINA breaks to the surface, cool and not in the least out of breath. She eases herself onto the catwalk and retrieves her white coat.

The excess water gathers in glistening droplets on her marvellous waterproof skin. A toss of her head, a shiver of her body, and she sends a delicious rain onto the faces below her.

She throws something to GEDDES.

MARINA

There's the dud.

GEDDES

You can take some lunch Marina.

MARINA

Sure.

SCENE NINETEEN continued

She leaves the Lab, with the slightest hesitation of a look at OLDSEN as she passes. He twitches with admiration.

GEDDES

She's a good girl, but she's not in on the Ferness thing yet... I'll show you the site models now... let you see what you're in the market for Macintyre...

GEDDES moves to a steel cabinet and unlocks it. He pulls out pieces of an elaborate model of the whole planned refinery complex. Gantries and pipelines and buildings on stilts and bits of harbour installations, all made in fine detail.

He plops the various bits into the tank and soon the shape of the terminal and refinery emerges. The scale of the devastation to FERNESS emerges too.

The whole of the bay fills up with storage tanks and oddly shaped buildings. Service jetties stretch far out into the bay, buildings ring the shoreline.

Even MAC and OLDSEN are awed by the scale of the change to be wraught on FERNESS. GEDDES is excited, like a kid.

GEDDES

Wonderful eh? I've worked out the stresses to the last PSI. This baby will last a thousand years... forever... it'll even survive the next ice age... I proved it... I simulated ten thousand years of intense glaciation over the whole bay...

He is still adding bits and pieces to the model.

GEDDES

Of course we don't need that ice age... I could stop the whole thing... I could divert the Gulf Stream... I could take it up past Greenland and unfreeze the Arctic Circle... I proved it here... on the computer... but they won't listen... they want to freeze.

GEDDES gets morose all of a sudden. MAC and OLDSEN feel obliged to cheer him up.

MAC

This is a terrific scheme here... the structures and everything...

GEDDES responds a little.

SCENE NINETEEN continued

GEDDES

Yes. It's solid granite bedrock in that bay. It's a good bay...

MAC AND OLDSEN nod enthusiastically

GEDDES

But it's not unfreezing the Arctic Circle, is it? It's not the same thing...

MAC gets serious

MAC

You're doing good work here Geddes... we all do what we can, that's all we can do...

OLDSEN joins in

OLDSEN

And we'll do what we can... we'll get that bay for you... if that's the bay you want... you're gonna have it!

GEDDES allows himself to be warmed by this support.

GEDDES

Thanks, thanks.

OLDSEN wantsto change the tone of the conversation.

OLDSEN

Will... Marina be back?

GEDDES

Not for a while.

MAC

We should head north soon.

OLDSEN

Yes boss. It's a four hour drive.

MAC and OLDSEN make to leave.

MAC

Thanks Geddes... see you when we get back maybe...

SCENE NINETEEN continued

GEDDES is behaving sheepishly. He stretches into the tank and retrieves one of the smaller components of the model, a replica of a refinery tower. He gives it to MAC.

GEDDES

Take it... keep it...

MAC is suitably touched

MAC

thanks... I will

SCENE TWENTY

THE ROAD NORTH.

MAC and OLDSEN are passing through the flatlands of ABERDEEN. The area is reminiscent of the mid-west of America, on a reduced scale. It seems that OLDSEN'S car radio can only play country music, which adds to the effect of being back in the States.

SCENE TWENTY-ONE

CAR INTERIOR. DAY.

MAC attempts to make conversation over the noise of Patsy Cline or John Pryne.

MAC

I saw a movie once... we pay more for an automobile than the entire cost of Columbus's trip to America... that's progress eh?

OLDSEN is silent for a while.

OLDSEN

What kind of automobile?

MAC

I don't know what kind of automobile... a four door sedan I suppose... A Ford or a Pontiac or something...

OLDSEN

Something in the eight thousand dollar range?

SCENE TWENTY-ONE continued

MAC

I suppose so.

MAC gives up further attempts at conversation after this meaningless exchange with OLDSEN.

SCENE TWENTY-TWO

EXTERIOR. DAY. HIGHLAND LANDSCAPE.

They are passing through a different kind of scenery now. The flatlands, cultivated and rich, have given way to the more wild uplands, a more typical Scottish image. We keep the shots wide for the drama of them.

SCENE TWENTY-THREE

MAC and OLDSEN stop at a lonely filling station for gas.

OLDSEN attends to the car while MAC takes a stroll a few yards down the road. MAC sniffs the air, smelling the Highland air for the first time.

SCENE TWENTY-FOUR

ON THE ROAD AGAIN. CAR INTERIOR. DAY.

OLDSEN breaks the silence this time.

OLDSEN

What are you thinking about?

MAC

Girls... naked girls...

OLDSEN

Me too...

MAC

In a fish tank...

OLDSEN

Yeh

SCENE TWENTY-FIVE

STILL ON THE ROAD. TWILIGHT.

The sun is low in the sky now, occasionally vanishing behind the peak of a far mountain, appearing again all of a sudden to assault OLDSEN's eyes with its glare.

MAC is sleeping. And then suddenly he is awake. OLDSEN has skidded the car to a halt.

MAC comes fully awake very quickly and looks at OLDSEN.

OLDSEN

I think we hit something... It got misty all of a sudden and I think we hit something...

The motor has stalled. There is silence, sudden and total.

OLDSEN looks at MAC, waiting for orders. OLDSEN is in the habit of running out of ideas very quickly.

MAC gets out of the car, and OLDSEN follows him. The mist is thickening around them, and dusk is settling quickly.

They inch towards the front of the car, afraid of what they might find there.

What they find as they come around either side of the engine bonnet is a rabbit, injured and stunned, but not dead.

The rabbit isn't twitching, but is sitting placidly, breathing rather heavily.

OLDSEN

Aw shit... I hate hitting things.

MAC

I think it's just kind of stunned.

They inch closer to it.

OLDSEN

Maybe a broken leg or something. Will we put it out of its misery?

MAC

What d'you mean?

OLDSEN

Kill it... hit it with something hard...

MAC

You've already done that, with a two ton automobile... put it in the car...

SCENE TWENTY-FIVE continued

OLDSEN does as he is told, lifting the unprotesting rabbit and wrapping it into his jacket.

SCENE TWENTY-SIX

CAR INTERIOR. DUSK.

OLDSEN has placed the rabbit in the back seat, on top of the car rug. The three of them sit in the ever-thickening mist.

MAC

Where are we?

OLDSEN

I don't know.

MAC looks at him, rabbit-murdering incompetent that he is.

OLDSEN

The last couple of road signs were in Gaelic... It's not one of my languages...

MAC

You speak languages?

OLDSEN

French, Italian, Spanish, Greek, Turkish, Russian, Swedish, German, Japanese, Dutch, Polish... I have a facility with languages.

MAC gives him a hard look.

MAC

Can you say anything interesting in any of them?

OLDSEN

I don't know what you mean...

MAC lets the subject drop.

MAC

I'll try and walk us down the road. I'll keep to the inside edge.

SCENE TWENTY-SIX continued

MAC gets out of the car. It is almost dark by now. He takes the flashlight from the glove box with him.

MAC makes his way to the front of the car, almost becoming invisible from OLDSEN'S point of view.

Suddenly there is a build up of sound, and a light rushing upon them. The light becomes two points of light, emerging rapidly from the mist, and with them a ghostly unfamiliar shape and a harsh engine noise. Above it all the sound of someone singing to himself in a loud uninhibited voice. The shape and the lights and the noise pass. Once more there is silence and the mist.

MAC gets back into the car.

MAC

Jesus!

OLDSEN

Maybe we should sit it out.

MAC agrees in silence. He fixes his seat into recline, and digs around in his pockets.

MAC

I've got a chocolate bar and some gum... what've you got?

OLDSEN

Nothing.

MAC seems to get possessive about his supplies.

MAC

D'you want some chocolate?

OLDSEN

Yes please!

MAC gives him not quite half of the chocolate bar.

MAC has found a photograph in his wallet. He shows it to OLDSEN

MAC

This is my car... a Porsche Targa Drophead 911 series... turbocharged...

OLDSEN admires the photograph.

SCENE TWENTY-SIX continued

MAC

A good car is important... I used to get migraine headaches when I had a Chevvy...

OLDSEN

Really?

MAC is in his stride.

MAC

There's only two things better than a German car... that's a Swiss watch, and a woman from anywhere... a car like this won't let you down.

MAC puts the photograph back in this wallet and settles down to sleep.

OLDSEN

Goodnight.

SCENE TWENTY-SEVEN

EXTERIOR MOOR. TWILIGHT

From a vantage point on the hillside above the road we can see the exact predicament of MAC and OLDSEN. They are trapped in a pocket of mist lying stubbornly across the road. On either side the valley is clear.

The sun has set and the darkness is finally taking over.

SCENE TWENTY-EIGHT

ROADSIDE. MORNING.

The car sits in the early morning sunshine. We hear the natural sounds of the light wind and the first morning birds.

Then we hear a tuneful electronic alarm playing THE YELLOW ROSE OF TEXAS. It plays the first two bars of the tune over and over again, friendly but insistent.

Inside the car MAC switches off the alarm on his wristwatch. OLDSEN comes awake too. They are both cold and cramped and hungry and disorientated.

SCENE TWENTY-EIGHT continued

OLDSEN

Hi!

MAC

Yeh.

They check out the rabbit in the back seat. It still sits open eyed and breathing.

MAC gets out of the car to stretch his legs. OLDSEN gets out too and wanders to the grass verge to pick some leaves for the rabbit's breakfast.

In the middle of the road MAC goes through what is apparently a morning ritual. He works his way through a pattern of limbering-up exercises.

It is the kind of performance that would look good if done in front of a mirror in a sweat-suit. But here in the wilderness with MAC in his crumpled oilman's suit, it looks a little incongruous.

OLDSEN watches this. He also scans the landscape that they find themselves in.

OLDSEN

Some place.

MAC carries on with his exercises.

MAC

Just a whole lot of scenery. What do you do with it after you've looked at it?

The road lies in a flat boggy moorland. All around, at a distance of some miles, are mountain peaks, awkward shapes, extinct volcanoes, smoothed down by a couple of ice ages.

A very old landscape. Older than KNOX OIL. Older than the oil itself.

Then another surprise. With a sudden scream of sound two jet fighter bombers streak overhead at very low level.

MAC and OLDSEN instinctively duck. In a matter of seconds the aircraft have vanished behind some hills, and their noise is gone almost before they are out of sight.

SCENE TWENTY-NINE

CAR INTERIOR. DAY.

OLDSEN is feeding the rabbit some leaves before they set off.

OLDSEN

Think I'll call him Harry.

MAC

No. Her name's Rita.

The rabbit doesn't appear to care what it is called, but is thankful for the docken leaves and grass at any rate.

SCENE THIRTY

COASTLINE. DAY.

MAC and OLDSEN have driven on and are now near their destination. They are on the high road that leads into the village. From the vantage point where they stop for a moment they can see the whole village and bay spread out below them. They know it's the right place because it looks exactly like GEDDES'S model.

OLDSEN

Looks just like the model.

MAC

Mmm... it's more expensive.

They drive down the road and into the village.

SCENE THIRTY-ONE

FERNESS VILLAGE.

The village is still quiet, untouched as yet by the new day. MAC and OLDSEN don't have trouble finding the hotel since it is the only substantial building on the street.

The hotel is called THE MACASKIL ARMS.

MAC and OLDSEN leave the car and try the door of the hotel. It is locked. They rattle the door and bang the knocker.

Soon a face appears at a first floor window. It is URQUHART. STELLA appears at the window behind him. URQUHART shouts down to MAC.

SCENE THIRTY-ONE continued

URQUHART

What is it?

MAC

Sorry to trouble you so early... we'd like to check in, and maybe eat something.

URQUHART

Breakfast isn't until eight... seven in the fishing season... it's not the fishing season.

MAC

Could we check in anyway? We've been on the road all night. We have an injured rabbit also.

URQUHART'S head disappears from the window. Soon the door is opened and URQUHART motions MAC and OLDSEN inside. URQUHART is in his dressing gown.

URQUHART

Passing through?

SCENE THIRTY-TWO

INTERIOR HOTEL. DAY.

By now URQUHART has led them inside towards the kitchen.

MAC

We might stay for a few days.

URQUHART shows them the kitchen

URQUHART

Why don't you make yourselves some toast and coffee... we can take care of the formalities later... I have to go back upstairs...

URQUHART leaves them without further ceremony.

MAC

Thank you.

They hear URQUHART padding upstairs and a door gently closed.

SCENE THIRTY-TWO continued

OLDSEN

Nice people.

MAC is already digging around in the freezer.

MAC

And they speak English.

OLDSEN lifts his head and looks at the ceiling.

OLDSEN

Think they're at it up there?

MAC

No! Of course not!

Despite this vehement denial MAC becomes quiet also and strains his ears, trying to pick up any tell-tale sound from upstairs.

This game gets a hold of both of them as they silently move around the kitchen preparing something to eat, and at the same time straining for any hint of sound from upstairs.

SCENE THIRTY-THREE

UPSTAIRS BEDROOM. DAY.

URQUHART and STELLA are playing roughly the same game, lying in bed trying to detect sounds or conversation from downstairs. They talk in whispers.

STELLA

Think it's them?

URQUHART

I'm sure... one hundred per cent sure... Christmas might be early this year.

STELLA smiles. When she smiles like that URQUHART can't help kissing her. When that happens they invariable end up making love. What a nice couple.

SCENE THIRTY-FOUR

DINING ROOM. DAY.

MAC and OLDSEN are just finishing their first lunch at THE MACASKILL ARMS. URQUHART has been serving them, and wears a waist apron and has his sleeves rolled up.

URQUHART

Everything ok gents?

MAC

Very nice thank you.

URQUHART

We do a hot lunch every other day...so you were lucky.

URQUHART takes some dishes from the table and makes his way to the kitchen. MAC calls him back.

MAC

We have to talk to a Mr Urquhart, an accountant... can you tell me where we might find him?

URQUHART

Indeed yes... he has an office right next door, to the left, on the first floor. I know for a fact that he'll be in his office in about fifteen minutes.

MAC

Thank you

SCENE THIRTY-FIVE

URQUHART'S OFFICE. DAY.

MAC and OLDSEN are climbing the stairs to the office.

They knock gently on the door. A voice beckons them from inside.

URQUHART

Come in!

MAC and OLDSEN enter. They are surprised to find URQUHART there. URQUHART doesn't prolong the game and introduces himself properly at once.

SCENE THIRTY-FIVE continued

URQUHART

Hello again. I'm Gordon Urquhart... in a small place like this we usually have to double up on jobs... I'm a taxi driver sometimes too... sit down...

MAC and OLDSEN sit down opposite URQUHART

URQUHART

What can I do for you, apart from taking your order for dinner?

MAC manages a smile.

MAC

I represent Knox Oil and Gas Mr Urquhart...

URQUHART

Gordon...

MAC

Ok Gordon... and I believe some of my people let you know that we would be calling...

URQUHART

That's right... so, what's up?

MAC

We're in the way of acquiring some real estate in the area Gordon... we want to ask for your help in co-ordinating our work.

URQUHART

What do you want to buy?

MAC

I won't be coy with you Gordon... we want to buy the whole place... we want to buy everything from the cliffs to the north right through to the bay on the far side, and we want to go about a mile inland too... that's all.

Even cool URQUHART is taken aback. But he hides it well. His mind is racing, but he keeps up his act well.

URQUHART

That's a tall order... on the face of it I would say it wasn't actually possible...

SCENE THIRTY-FIVE continued

URQUHART continued

you're talking about fifteen, maybe twenty properties, families, businesses, farms... you're talking about a lot of money...

MAC

I know.

URQUHART

What kind of money?

MAC

I don't think we have to go into figures right now... I have a breakdown on the properties... I think it's a matter of bringing the community together... making a collective deal if you like... that's why I would like your help.

URQUHART

You want me to pull it together?

MAC

That's right.

URQUHART

Frankly, I don't think it'll work, but I'll try for you... you're talking about more than property here... you're talking about a way of life, generations of effort in farms and in the area as a whole... You're talking about ... millions...

MAC

Maybe.

URQUHART

This is going to take time... and even then I don't honestly think that it'll work... why don't you get to know the place... take a day or so... I'll take things as far as I can and let you know... how about it?

MAC

Ok Gordon, that sounds like the right thing to do.

URQUHART

Are you talking about the church too?

SCENE THIRTY-FIVE continued

MAC

Yes.

URQUHART

It's going to be tricky, the church has very definite views about property...

MAC

We'll leave it with you anyway. Ok?

MAC and OLDSEN prepare to leave.

URQUHART

Take in the beach. It's a beautiful place... relax for a while...

MAC

And you'll work out some numbers...

URQUHART

I'll do my best.

MAC and OLDSEN leave the office. URQUHART keeps up his cool and sober act until they are on their way down the stairs. Then he goes slightly haywire. He prances about the room, laughing, singing, doing half-summersaults almost smacking his fists together. He knows he has the chance to land the big one.

While he is still on his high he attempts to get down to business. He sets up his electronic calculator on his table and pulls out masses of files from his cabinet. Then he sits down to work. He is still over-excited.

SCENE THIRTY-SIX

DINING ROOM. EVENING.

URQUHART has calmed down. He is playing his waiter act again, serving MAC and OLDSEN their dinner. The musack machine is playing a selection of accordian band tunes, at a pleasantly low level.

The dining room is empty apart from MAC and OLDSEN. URQUHART goes about his duties quietly. No reference is made to the dealings of the afternoon. A certain formal restraint hangs in the air.

SCENE THIRTY-SEVEN

FERNESS BEACH. TWILIGHT.

It is a long, glowing summer twilight. In this part of the world the sun hardly dips below the horizon in high summer, so there is always colour in the sky. The beach is in a long sweeping curve, firm sand and pebble. The light is horizontal from the low-lying sun, and is full of colour and depth.

The sound of the sea-wash sets a rhythm to the scene, and the constant cries of the wading seabirds, the plovers, the oystercatchers, the dabchicks, settles into the ears gently.

MAC and OLDSEN are being pixilated for the first time.

We see them at first as small figures set in this land-and-seascape. They are walking along the edge of the shore, heading away from the village and into the setting sun.

OLDSEN

What d'you make of Urquhart?

MAC

He smells the money...

OLDSEN

Nice beach eh?

MAC

We should come here when we have to talk business... the hotel is too public.

OLDSEN

Right.

MAC

It's kind of peaceful too...

They have stopped walking now. Some way ahead of them they see the outline of a hovel built from driftwood and canvas, lying up the beach near the bordering grassland. Smoke is drifting lazily upwards from a fire outside the hovel.

It inhibits them from walking further, although they don't comment on it. They look around them, at the sea and the distant cliffs.

OLDSEN

That's where the jetty will be... and the storage tanks over here, all the way up.

SCENE THIRTY-SEVEN continued

MAC

Yeh.

OLDSEN

And the pipeline terminal will just about join both sides of the bay, far out there.

MAC

We're just about where the pumping station will be.

OLDSEN

It's some business.

MAC

The key business. Imagine a world without oil... no automobiles, no paint... no ink, no detergents... and polythene, and water-proof coats...

OLDSEN

... and polish, and nylon, and perspex, and dry cleaning fluid...

MAC

They make dry cleaning fluid from petroleum?

OLDSEN

Sure they do.

MAC

Never knew that.

Suddenly behind them they hear a definite "kerplomp".

They wheel round just in time to see the widening circles of a splash in the water. Neither of them can offer an explanation, so they walk on back to the village.

The sky is dark enough now for one or two stars to be showing through.

MAC

You know anything about the stars?

OLDSEN

Not much. Why?

SCENE THIRTY-SEVEN continued

MAC

I want to check something out... I'll get a book or something.

Then MAC'S alarm watch goes off again, playing THE YELLOW ROSE OF TEXAS, trying to compete in its puny electronic way with the sounds around them.

MAC

It's business time in Houston. I want to make some calls.

They head back to the welcoming strand of lights of the village.

SCENE THIRTY-EIGHT

INTERIOR HOTEL BAR. EVENING.

A few of the locals are in the small old fashioned bar when MAC and OLDSEN arrive from the beach. GIDEON the boat painter is one of them. Serving behind the bar is RODDY, a young man who holds down about six jobs around the village.

MAC and OLDSEN come up to the counter.

RODDY

Can I help you gentlemen?

MAC

I'd like to use a telephone please, is there one in the hotel?

RODDY points to a pay-phone in a corner of the bar.

RODDY

Or else there's the phone box across the road at the jetty. You can talk to anywhere in the world from there.

OLDSEN

You'll need some change.

MAC looks a bit helpless, so OLDSEN puts a five pound note of his own on the counter.

SCENE THIRTY-NINE continued

IAIN

Here we are Mr Mac. Full working order...

IAIN hangs around, still eager to please.

MAC

Thanks. I'm fine now... thank you...

IAIN

You have the proper code? Or will I get the operator for you?

MAC is insistent.

MAC

I'm fine now thank you... I have the code... I'll see you later ok?

MAC manages to ease IAIN from the 'phone box and proceeds to dial the twelve or so digits that will connect him with HOUSTON.

IAIN hovers outside the 'phone box for a while, peering in at MAC. MAC insistently shooing him away whilst still trying to be friendly and even tempered.

Smiling IAIN eventually leaves him in peace, as the international connection is made.

SCENE FORTY

KNOX OIL AND GAS. HOUSTON. DAY.

The cut from the quiet of FERNESS to HOUSTON is a dramatic one. At KNOX OIL it is still a bustling working afternoon.

One of a row of switchboard operators plugs into MAC'S call.

OPERATOR

Thank you for calling Knox Oil and Gas...

She hears the pips of the connected tone. The pips stop when MAC has inserted enough money at his end to validate the call.

OPERATOR

Thank you for calling Knox Oil and...

MAC'S voice butts in. He sounds far away and lonely.

SCENE THIRTY-EIGHT *continued*

OLDSEN

Can you change this for me?

RODDY

Fives... tens?

OLDSEN

Tens... the lot.

RODDY digs around in the cash box, but can't make up five pounds worth of ten pences. He addresses the whole room.

RODDY

Any tens boys? The gentleman here wants to make a very important long distance 'phone call... intercontinental... give me some tens lads!

The boys gather around MAC and OLDSEN and empty their pockets on the counter. Everyone is over-eager to be of assistance, and MAC and OLDSEN are helpless for a while in the middle of this coin-chinking mellee.

Eventually the pantomime subsides and MAC drags himself to the door under the weight of fifty ten-pence pieces.

OLDSEN is left alone to order a drink for himself, not quite sure if they have been truly helped by the locals or completely sent up by them. From our point of view the performance seemed like a mixture of both.

SCENE THIRTY-NINE

PHONE BOX. FERNESS. NIGHT.

MAC clinks his way from the Hotel to the 'phone box. Another figure follows him from the bar. It is IAIN, one of the young men of the village.

He overtakes MAC in time to get to the 'phone box before him. He holds the door open for MAC in a helpful and not servile way. The 'phone box is clean and well maintained. Even the light works.

IAIN is eager to be helpful, keen that MAC makes full use of the facility. He elbow-rubs a dirty mark from the door, then hands the receiver to MAC.

SCENE FORTY continued

MAC

Ok, ok... connect me with Mr Calvin Wrain, Acquisitions and Negotiations, and hurry please, I'm speaking from a very great distance.

OPERATOR

Hold the line please.

SCENE FORTY-ONE

CAL'S OFFICE. KNOX OIL AND GAS. HOUSTON. DAY.

CAL picks up the telephone as it rings.

CAL

Wrain... Mac? How are you?

For the rest of this scene we will intercut between MAC in SCOTLAND and CAL in HOUSTON. The bustle of voices and action in CAL'S large open-plan office contrasts with the stillness at MAC'S end.

MAC

Cal, I'm in a payphone... take this number... Ferness 261... you'll have to check out the code... I'll get some other numbers once I know the place better...

The time pips sound again and MAC punches in another handful of coins.

MAC

Cal?... How are things?

CAL

Just the same Mac, it's only been a couple of days...

MAC

It seems longer than that... I feel as if I've been here forever...

CAL

How's the deal?

SCENE FORTY-ONE continued

MAC

It might take a little time... there's a nice beach here Cal...

The time pips sound again. MAC puts his remaining handful of coins into the machine.

MAC

Cal... you've got the number... this is my current number... keep in touch... I'll do the same... 261 Cal...

CAL

Sure... I have the number... keep at it Mac... just spend the money...

The pips sound again and the call is over. MAC is left with the dead line, and the quiet, and the darkness outside.

MAC leaves the 'phone box and stands outside in the dark. The sounds of the sea and the birds at a distance takes over again. Above him, more stars are appearing in the almost black sky. The stillness of everything seems to transfix MAC. It's just not possible to rush around in this kind of atmosphere.

SCENE FORTY-TWO

HOUSTON. KNOX OIL AND GAS. HAPPER'S PENTHOUSE OFFICE.

HAPPER is with his hired tormentor MORITZ. They seem to be reaching the end of another session.

HAPPER

You're destroying me Moritz.

MORITZ

Yes... we're really getting somewhere now... I think we can move on...

HAPPER

What d'you mean?

MORITZ

The next stage... we should physicalise things a little...

SCENE FORTY-TWO continued

HAPPER

What?

MORITZ

I could hit you... wouldn't that humiliate you? We could progress by leaps and bounds... I could tie you up...

HAPPER is shocked and affronted. A powerful puritan nerve in his system has been disturbed.

HAPPER

Forget it Moritz... you're talking about perversion, not therapy... get out... don't come back...

MORITZ

That's good! You're reacting... you're upset already! Think what it'll be like when I punch you!

HAPPER

Get out... before I punch you!

MORITZ heads for the door, still beaming at the raging HAPPER.

MORITZ

This is most gratifying Mr Happer... it vindicates my whole theory... the whole programme... I've got your ego on the run Mr Happer, you piece of shit... sorry sir, that just slipped out... you'll be hearing from me... we can't give up now... you're a star patient Mr Happer!

Just as he is closing the door MORITZ sticks his head into the room again.

MORITZ

I might have to raise the fee when we do get physical Mr Happer, but it won't be anything unreasonable... good afternoon...

HAPPER is thankfully along now. He switches on his intercom.

HAPPER

Mrs Wyatt, cancel my future appointments with Moritz... and get me Hawaii on the 'phone... I want Fisher at the Observatory.

SCENE FORTY-THREE

MAC'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

MAC is lying awake in bed. Beyond the wall he hears the low talking and occasional laughter of STELLA and URQUHART.

He lies for a while, as if speculating on the scene next door. Then he looks across at HARRY/RITA the RABBIT, who is sitting on the chair beside the bed, eyes blinking and nose twitching as usual, MAC'S closest companion.

SCENE FORTY-FOUR

FERNESS. HOTEL DINING ROOM. DAY.

Mealtimes are becoming something of a ritual between URQUHART and MAC and OLDSEN. There seems to be an understanding that they don't discuss their business whilst URQUHART is acting out his role as waiter.

The situation also inhibits any general conversation between MAC and OLDSEN. URQUHART probably enjoys the weird pantomime of mealtimes more than the other two do.

URQUHART is pouring their second cup of coffee.

URQUHART

More toast?

MAC

No thanks.

OLDSEN

Yes please.

URQUHART

Very well.

URQUHART goes back into the kitchen. MAC and OLDSEN sit on in awkward silence.

SCENE FORTY-FIVE

FERNESS BEACH. DAY.

MAC and OLDSEN are seeking refuge on the beach, or that's what it seems like. They are walking on the foreshore again.

SCENE FORTY-FIVE continued

A little of the tenseness of breakfast time still lingers with them, but it soon vanishes as they begin to talk and relax.

They are still dressed in their business suits and are carrying their executive brief cases. They look like insurance men suddenly beamed to the wrong planet. Or maybe they look more like contract killers on a job.

MAC

We'll give Urquhart twenty-four hours.

OLDSEN

Yeh... look at the birds.

OLDSEN points to some small waders at the water's edge.

MAC

Don't look like seagulls.

OLDSEN

Too small for seagulls... and they're not white.

The birds are Turnstones. They feed on the life underneath pebbles on the waterline.

MAC

They'll get wet.

OLDSEN

Maybe they're waterproof.

MAC

You get waterproof birds?

OLDSEN

Sure.

Just then two jet bombers scream low overhead. MAC and OLDSEN instinctively duck. The aircraft head out to the far side of the cliffs. Soon afterwards they see large puffs of smoke and then hear dull thuds from the direction of the cliffs. They look at each other, but don't make any comment.

They see another figure on the beach, far ahead of them, digging around in a patch of dried seaweed. He looks like

SCENE FORTY-FIVE continued

a beachcomber. The figure stands upright and gives them a wave.

MAC and OLDSEN look around them, in case he's waving at somebody else. They don't return the wave.

MAC

Must be the dude from the shack.

OLDSEN

Yeh. Crazy old man.

MAC changes the subject.

MAC

Let's check out the church. Talk to the preacher... I want to do something.

OLDSEN

Good idea.

They walk away from the water towards the grassland and the road, with the church on the edge of the village.

SCENE FORTY-SIX

FERNESS CHURCH. INTERIOR. DAY.

Something is going on in the church. The joint is jumping. The entire population of the village is inside, and not in a very reverential mood. URQUHART is in the pulpit, trying to bring order to the mild uproar that is in progress.

The real preacher, REV MURDO MACPHERSON, is standing at the foot of the pulpit.

URQUHART

Please everybody... calm down... nobody's mentioned money yet... don't get excited...

REV MACPHERSON

Quiet please everyone!

The chattering subsides.

URQUHART

Thanks Murdo... All I need just now is your

SCENE FORTY-SIX continued

URQUHART

ok to negotiate... I've got the Knox man on the hook... just give me the time to land him in style... stay calm and let me handle it... he's got a bag-full of money... I need your patience and your faith... trust me...

GIDEON stands up from the congregation.

GIDEON

Do they want to buy a boat too Mr Urquhart?

URQUHART

Gideon, if things go well they'll have to buy their own shirts back off us this time next week... stay calm... trust me...

The REV is obviously excited at having a full house for the first time in a long time.

REV MACPHERSON

Gordon, I'd like to say a short prayer now... since we're all here...

URQUHART

Fine Murdo... Quiet please everyone! Murdo wants us to say a short prayer!

The REV raises his hands over the congregation.

REV MACPHERSON

Lord...

The REV'S prayer is interrupted by RODDY, who bursts into the church from the main door.

RODDY

The Yank and the other one! They're coming across to the church! I saw them!

REV MACPHERSON

Oh God!

URQUHART

Quiet everyone! Very still! Murdo, can you deal with them?

SCENE FORTY-SIX continued

The poor REV has no option.

REV MACPHERSON

Not a sound please.

The REV goes to the main door at the back of the hall and waits, keeping the door closed.

Everyone else remains still and quiet. URQUHART tip-toes down from the pulpit.

SCENE FORTY-SEVEN

EXTERIOR CHURCH. DAY.

The churchyard is thick with gravestones. Three or four hundred year's worth of life and death. One stone can tell you the history of four generations of a family.

MAC and OLDSEN are approaching the church, and are diverted by the graveyard. They wander in amongst the stones. This gives THE REV time to prepare himself.

With a deep breath he opens the main door and steps outside, taking care to close the door behind him. He puts on a brave and friendly smile and goes to join MAC and OLDSEN.

REV MACPHERSON

Good morning. Can I help you?

MAC

Reverend Macpherson?

MAC

My name's Macintyre.

REV MACPHERSON

You're not Scottish are you?

MAC

I'm American actually.

REV MACPHERSON

I'm not a Scotsman either... I'm an African.

The REV is indeed an African.

SCENE FORTY-SEVEN continued

REV MACPHERSON

I came here as a student minister and didn't ever get away again... what about your friend?

OLDSEN

I'm Scots reverend... except my father is Norwegian.

The REV allows himself a laugh.

REV MACPHERSON

Now, what can I do for you?

MAC

We're here on a kind of mission...

REV MACPHERSON

Same here.

MAC

We're in the way of wanting to acquire some real estate in the area sir, and we want to establish... relationships... with those who own land herebouts...

REV MACPHERSON

You want to buy my church?

MAC

Well... not as a going concern.

SCENE FORTY-EIGHT

CHURCH INTERIOR. DAY.

Inside the church everyone is stalk-still. One or two adventurous people are attempting to sneek a look from the windows. URQUHART is motioning them to sit down again.

Some others are behind the door, trying to catch some of the conversation from outside.

SCENE FORTY-NINE

CHURCH EXTERIOR. DAY.

MAC'S conversation with THE REV is interrupted by two more jet bombers screaming overhead, one chasing the other. Soon the thuds are heard over the bay, and columns of smoke rise behind the cliffs.

REV MACPHERSON

They practice here... as long as they're bombing the beach they can't be bombing anywhere else. it's kind of comforting.

MAC and OLDSEN take in the logic of this. THE REV begins to walk them down the path away from the church.

REV MACPHERSON

So far as your business here is concerned, all I can recommend is that you talk to our Mr Urquhart. He looks after the interests of the church... in temporal matters at least...

MAC

I understand... it sounds like good advice reverend.

THE REV is quite pleased to have walked them to the end of the churchyard by now. He is a lot more at his ease.

MAC

I know I don't have to ask you sir, but will you treat our conversation with confidence, for the meantime?

REV MACPHERSON

I give you my word that I'll be as discreet as the next man Mr Macintyre... but news does tend to travel fast around here...

MAC

I understand sir.

SCENE FIFTY

FERNESS BEACH. DAY.

MAC and OLDSEN are taking the beach way back to the village.

They have stopped by the edge of the grassland for a moment or two of thought. They are facing the sea, and watching the beachcomber still picking his way along the shore.

SCENE FIFTY continued

MAC

Don't know why I'm here. I'm a telex man... I could sew this whole thing up in one afternoon on the wires... that's the kind of person I am... I need electricity...

OLDSEN nods his head in some kind of agreement.

Behind them they don't notice the scurrying, scampering line of villagers leaving the church and heading down the road back to the village, herded by URQUHART and the very compromised REV MACPHERSON.

The entire population moves furtively and soundlessly back to FERNESS.

MAC is now musing about the bombing range. Puffs of smoke are still visible on the horizon.

MAC

I don't like that bombing range... it spoils a very nice area...

OLDSEN

It's a crime.

SCENE FIFTY-ONE

DINING ROOM. INTERIOR. NIGHT.

MAC and OLDSEN are enjoying a hearty dinner, with URQUHART as usual acting out the role of perfect waiter-cum-host.

While clearing some dishes from the table URQUHART talks to them.

URQUHART

How is the Lapin Casserole?

MAC

Terrific!

URQUHART leaves the room, smiling

OLDSEN'S face has a concerned look. He is thinking.

OLDSEN

Lapin... that's rabbit...

SCENE FIFTY-ONE continued

MAC

Rabbit?

URQUHART comes back into the room. MAC doesn't waste any time getting down to business.

MAC

Is this any particular Lapin?

URQUHART stays cool, if a little defensive.

URQUHART

It's the one from your bedroom, it that's what you mean.

MAC and OLDSEN speak in unison.

MAC

Rita!

OLDSEN

Harry!

URQUHART is more on the defensive now.

URQUHART

We don't allow animals in the bedrooms... I should have told you sooner... I'm sorry.

MAC

This was a pet! Not an animal! She had a name! You don't eat things with names! This is horrific!

URQUHART

It was an injured rabbit, that's all... it was in shock, with a broken limb... it was in pain...

OLDSEN puts on an air of benign rationality. It only half works.

OLDSEN

I think you were a bit hasty Mr Urquhart... Mac was looking after it... all it needed was lots of rest, and the proper treatment... there was a chance of a full recovery...

SCENE FIFTY-ONE continued

OLDSEN continued

and a fully active life... [redacted]

URQUHART can hardly keep a straight face. STELLA now emerges from the kitchen. URQUHART tries to stifle his smirk as he talks to her.

URQUHART

They didn't like the rabbit.

OLDSEN makes another rational protest.

OLDSEN

Mac loved the rabbit... that's the point... it had a name! Two names!

URQUHART by now is enjoying the situation. He prods the remains of RITA/HARRY in the casserole dish.

URQUHART

I'm sorry... I'm not sure if there's a lot I can do though... is it worth calling the vet Stella?

For some reason STELLA decides not to join in the fun with him. Her sudden burst of chastisement comes as a shock.

STELLA

Don't be a clown Gordon... get into the kitchen and make some coffee.

URQUHART does as he is told, still stifling a smirk. He throws a final comment back as he leaves the room.

URQUHART

It had a broken leg... a clean snap... check the bones in the dish... if you don't believe me.

STELLA

I'm sorry Mac... but we eat rabbits here... the vet would've done the same... I didn't know she had a name...

MAC

That's ok Stella.

SCENE FIFTY-ONE continued

There is a silence, which seems to calm the air. Then STELLA speaks.

STELLA

How was it anyway?

MAC

It was nice... apart from being Rita, it was nice... was it a wine sauce?

STELLA nods.

SCENE FIFTY-TWO

FERNESS VILLAGE. MORNING.

The villagers are at their everyday affairs again, although from now on it's difficult not to believe that everything they do is part of a masquerade for the benefit of MAC and OLDSEN.

We find a group of fishermen on the jetty. One or two of them are working on the creels, repairing damaged ones. RODDY is one of the group.

EDWARD

Apart from anything else, a Rolls Royce will last far longer... it's a false economy to invest in cheap goods.

RODDY

It's not cheap! The Maserati's over thirty thousand... and it looks nicer!

The older men scoff at this impetuous youth.

EDWARD

I can just see you getting four or five winter lambs and a box of mackeral into the back of a Maserati... that's what you need your Rolls for... the space... adaptability... it'll carry anything anywhere.

PETER

Sounds like a very practical vehicle, the Rolls Royce... I hear Gideon is thinking of one of their engines for his boat...

SCENE FIFTY-THREE

DINING ROOM. DAY.

MAC and OLDSEN are finishing their lunch. That same sense of restraint hangs in the air.

URQUHART is in his apron and is clearing the table as MAC and OLDSEN leave the room.

URQUHART

Thank you gentlemen.

MAC turns at the door to give URQUHART a response.

MAC

Thanks. See you later...

As MAC turns to the door again he collides with OLDSEN, who was hovering at the door waiting for him. Their cool exit ends up being a bit clumsy.

SCENE FIFTY-FOUR

HOTEL KITCHEN. DAY.

URQUHART is washing up the lunch dishes with STELLA.

URQUHART

He's cool... or else he's an idiot.

STELLA

He hasn't made a move yet?

URQUHART

I'll give him until tonight... I've got to find out what kind of money he's got to play with...

STELLA

What do you reckon?

URQUHART

Millions.

STELLA

How many?

URQUHART

Shit, I don't know... five... ten?

SCENE FIFTY-FOUR continued

STELLA

Dollars?

URQUHART

He probably thinks in dollars, yes.

STELLA

D'you think I should risk it with the rabbit soup tonight?

URQUHART

I wouldn't

SCENE FIFTY-FIVE

FERNESS. EXTERIOR. DAY.

MAC and OLDSEN are on the beach. They are still in their business suits, although they have left their briefcases behind this time.

They are getting into the finer points of stone skimming. There are lots of good flat stones on this beach.

MAC

It's the wrist... that's where the skill is... it's a kind of flick... don't wave your arm...

OLDSEN

Look! I got a six!

MAC

I got a ten earlier... you never saw it, but I did... I think ten is the maximum you can get before it sinks... it's a scientific law.

OLDSEN

It's the size too... a middle kind of size seems to work best.

They see THE BEACHCOMBER waving at them again.

MAC

Shit, we better wave back this time...

SCENE FIFTY-FIVE continued

They dutifully stand and wave back.

OLDSEN

Hello Mr Beach Bum...

THE BEACHCOMBER stops waving and gets back to his work.

OLDSEN

I think I'll check out the cliffs, want to come?

MAC

I'll hang around here... maybe catch Urquhart later... you go ahead...

OLDSEN walks off in the direction of the far cliffs. He keeps to the waterline to avoid passing too closely to THE BEACHCOMBER.

MAC hovers around the shoreline for a while before making his way back in the direction of the village.

SCENE FIFTY-SIX

FERNESS VILLAGE. DAY.

At the jetty it is a normal working afternoon. At least that is the impression everyone seems anxious to make. Our group of fishermen are still working on their creels, looking quite picturesque.

GIDEON is at work painting his boat as usual. It is not called the BELLA MARGUERITA any more. He is painting the name THE SILVER DOLLAR on the side.

MAC is approaching the jetty from the beach. Rather than make an effort to avoid the group of locals, he decides to breeze in and pass the time of day with them.

MAC

Hello.

RODDY answers for the group.

RODDY

Fine day Mr Macintyre.

SCENE FIFTY-SIX continued

MAC

What are you doing?

MAC is taking an interest on their work on the creels.

RODDY

Fixing the creels... trying to keep the lobsters in and the crabs out.

MAC

What do you do with the lobsters?

RODDY

They catch an aeroplane every night at Inverness... next day they're being eaten in London or Paris. They see the world!

MAC

You don't eat them?

RODDY

They're too much trouble, and expensive. How's the 'phone box, is it all right?

MAC

Yes, it's fine.

RODDY

Gideon's going to give it a coat of paint for you.

MAC

Good.

GIDEON is smiling over at MAC between brushstrokes, trying to make as pleasing an impression as he can.

SCENE FIFTY-SEVEN

FERNESS CLIFFS. DAY.

OLDSEN has reached the cliffs and has climbed a moderate slope to take him away from the water's edge. He sits down to rest for a few moments. The sun is warming by now, and at this time of day the sea breeze is merely a breath against the cheeks.

SCENE FIFTY-EIGHT

CREEL BOAT. WHEELHOUSE, INTERIOR. DAY.

OLDSEN hasn't noticed the creel boat drifting a few hundred yards offshore.

The skipper has his binoculars trained on the cliffs. He watches for a moment or two then takes the glasses from his eyes. He picks up the microphone of the short wave CB radio rig in the cabin, and starts a transmission.

SKIPPER

Captain Bluebeard to General Store... do it to me good lady...

SCENE FIFTY-NINE

INTERIOR SHOP. FERNESS. DAY.

In the back of the shop is a CB rig also, operated very ably by MRS FRASER, the shopkeeper.

MRS FRASER

General Store on channel... you're wall to wall Bluebeard... come back?

SCENE SIXTY

CREEL BOAT CABIN.

SKIPPER

You're breaking the needles also good lady... I have an eyeball on the junior business suit. He's on the rocks... looks like for a couple of hours... what's the ten forty-three on Mr America... come back sweet thing?

SCENE SIXTY-ONE

MRS FRASER

General Store to Bluebeard... Mr America is jawing on the jetty this time... stay on a ten-twelve Bluebeard... final.

MRS FRASER leaves the rig and gets back to her other job of looking after the shop.

SCENE SIXTY-TWO

FERNESS CLIFFS. DAY.

OLDSEN is still resting on the cliff edge. A noise below him makes him more alert. He lifts himself up on one elbow and looks down onto the shore twenty feet below him. He sees a figure emerging from the water.

The figure is kitted out in diving equipment, with wet suit, air tank and face mask. The figure walks to a rock some way from the water and removes the tank and mask.

The figure has long hair and is female. OLDSEN sinks a little lower into the grass and keeps looking.

There is something familiar about the figure. She partially unzips her wet suit and tosses her head to shake it free of excess water.

OLDSEN eases himself up to get a better view. She must have eyes in the back of her wet suit. She turns around and looks directly up at OLDSEN'S hideout.

FIGURE

Come down!

OLDSEN instinctively sinks down into the slope. She calls on him again.

FIGURE

Come here! I want to talk to you!

The figure is MARINA from the Lab in ABERDEEN. OLDSEN brightens up when he recognises her, and forgets his embarrassment at being caught out. He stands up and makes his way down to join her.

They meet. OLDSEN is confused and pleased all at once.

MARINA

You're Mr What's-his-name from Knox.

OLDSEN

Danny! We met in Aberdeen!

MARINA

I remember.

OLDSEN attempts to make polite conversation.

OLDSEN

Did you swim all the way?

SCENE SIXTY-TWO continued

MARINA

No. I stay here a lot. This is my bay.

MARINA casts a proprietorial eye over the whole area.

MARINA

I'm working on a biological profile of the whole place. Didn't Geddes tell you?

OLDSEN

Not in so many words.

MARINA

I'm plotting everything... from the two headlands right inshore to the high tide mark.

OLDSEN

How's the water? Cold?

MARINA

Not as cold as it should be. The North Atlantic Drift comes in here... that's warmish water from the Caribbean... that's why it's special here. There's stuff fetching up here all the way from the Bahamas.

OLDSEN

That's a long way.

MARINA

You swim?

OLDSEN

Not that far.

MARINA

How are things in the village?

OLDSEN

Ok.

MARINA

They're good people. Let me know if I can help.

SCENE SIXTY-THREE

FERNESS. SHOP. INTERIOR. DAY.

From inside the shop we see MAC making his way from the jetty. He is walking casually, and seems to be settling into the rhythm of the place very well.

He crosses the road and comes into the shop.

MRS FRASER greets him.

MRS FRASER

Good afternoon.

MAC

Hello.

The shop is a typical Highland store, serving as a post office, chemist, clothing store, hardware, fancy goods, bookshop; in fact you name it, and they've got it. Wellington boots and cans of soup and transistor radios lie side by side on the shelves.

MAC

Can I have some toothpaste please?

MRS FRASER

Any particular kind?

MAC

Something with fluoride... or ammonia...

MRS FRASER

Ah yes...

She reaches over to a shelf and finds a suitable tube of toothpaste for MAC.

MAC

And some shampoo.

MRS FRASER

Dry, normal or greasy?

MAC

Normal... extra normal.

MRS FRASER fetches him some shampoo.

SCENE SIXTY THREE continued

MRS FRASER

Normal... and it does dandruff too.

From the back of the shop we hear MRS FRASER'S CB rig crackling into life, with another communication from CAPTAIN BLUEBEARD.

SKIPPER

Bluebeard to General Store... come on good lady... Bluebeard on channel... come on...

MRS FRASER keeps her cool. She excuses herself gracefully from MAC and goes into the back shop.

She speaks very firmly but quietly into the microphone.

MRS FRASER

General Store to Bluebeard... you're breaking the windows Bluebeard... I'm jaw jacking with Uncle Sam this time... will you listen out Bluebeard...

SKIPPER

I've copied the mail sweet lady... Bluebeard out and final...

MRS FRASER lowers the receiver volume on the CB rig and returns to MAC at the front of the shop. She maintains her quiet, friendly manner, and makes no reference to the interruption from the radio.

MAC is mystified, but is too polite to make comment.

MRS FRASER

Now... is there anything else I can give you? ... We've got some nice flippers in just now...

She points to some swimming flippers hanging on the wall.

MRS FRASER

... or a pocket calculator perhaps? I've got the re-chargeable ones with thirty-eight functions...

MAC

I think just the toothpaste and the shampoo just now thank you...

SCENE SIXTY-THREE continued

MAC gives her a five pound note.

MAC

... and could you give me some tens for the telephone... as many as you have actually.

MAC loads up with another pocketful of ten pence pieces.

MAC

Thank you.

He clinks his way out of the shop.

SCENE SIXTY-FOUR

HOTEL HALLWAY. DAY.

MAC has returned to the Hotel from the general store.

He is just about to make his way upstairs when he is diverted by the sound of music coming from the dining room.

The door is slightly ajar, so he peeps into the room.

STELLA and URQUHART seem to be taking a break from the clearing up. They are dancing around the dining room, a slow cuddle-up kind of dance. URQUHART has a dish towel thrown over his shoulder and his serving apron still on. A coffee cup dangles from the finger of STELLA'S hand, which is draped around URQUHART'S neck.

The tune on the muzak machine is SWEET LORRAINE.

MAC watches them for a while, fascinated. Then he moves slowly away from the door.

He decides not to go upstairs. He leaves his toothpaste and shampoo on the hall table and goes back outside.

SCENE SIXTY-FIVE

CLIFF BEACH. DAY.

OLDSEN and MARINA are still together. They are sitting on a rock. We can tell that OLDSEN is beginning to dote on her.

MARINA nods her head in the direction of the village.

SCENE SIXTY-FIVE continued

MARINA

They've been smelling the money ever since you two got here... they must be going crazy.

OLDSEN

You know why we're here?

MARINA

Of course... it's my project isn't it?

OLDSEN

Your project?

MARINA

The Marine Laboratory, here. I sent the proposals to Houston months ago... you're here to check it out right? Don't be coy.

OLDSEN

Sure... the marine laboratory.

MARINA

I know it's only a public relations number for Knox just now... but in ten year it'll be different... the sea's where the future is you know... not up in the stars... the future's in there.

She stabs a finger in the direction of the sea

OLDSEN

I see

MARINA

I'll have my biological profile finished in two years... then we can start the real work. Over two thirds of the planet is ocean... it's crazy that we don't use it... just floating ships on it is crazy.

OLDSEN

I'm not a great swimmer.

MARINA

Of course you are... everybody is... all you do is do it... I have to go...

MARINA starts to put on her tank and mask and head for the sea.

SCENE SIXTY-FIVE continued

OLDSEN

When can I see you again?

MARINA

I'm always around. I'll pop up and see you again soon.

OLDSEN is reluctant to let her go.

OLDSEN

You got enough air to get home?

MARINA

Yes.

OLDSEN

Take care anyway.

MARINA

See you.

She fixes her face mask and dips under the surface with a gentle "kerplomp".

OLDSEN is alone. Only the widening ripples on the water are left to persuade him that the whole encounter wasn't a dream.

He scans the water eagerly, hoping for a final glimpse of her.

SCENE SIXTY-SIX

FERNESS BEACH. DAY.

OLDSEN is running back to the village along the beach. His meeting with MARINA has really unhinged him. It is expressed in his manic race along the shore, trying to burn off the excess energy that is piling up in his brain.

He wants to shout "Eureka!" but then again he doesn't want anybody to hear.

SCENE SIXTY-SEVEN

FERNESS. DAY.

MAC is still loitering around the jetty. He seems to be taking to the pace of the place.

GIDEON is at work painting his boat. MAC is involved in helping him. He is showing him how to paint a dollar sign, as an embellishment to the name THE SILVER DOLLAR on the bow.

He paints it out roughly on a piece of wood.

MAC

That's all it is...

GIDEON studies it.

GIDEON

I'm not sure.

MAC sees OLDSEN running up from the beach towards the jetty.

OLDSEN is going at such a speed that he is all of a sudden there, beside MAC and GIDEON. He brings himself to an emergency stop, but is still over excited and jumpy.

MAC

What's up?

OLDSEN

Nothing... nothing.

MAC looks at him curiously, suspiciously even. OLDSEN hops around, trying to wind himself down.

SCENE SIXTY-EIGHT

HOTEL BAR. INTERIOR. EVENING.

URQUHART is serving behind the bar. A group of locals are talking to him anxiously. It looks like a deputation. FRASER is there, and RODDY and GIDEON, and one or two more.

FRASER

We don't see the point... why don't you just ask him to make us an offer?

SCENE SIXTY-EIGHT continued

URQUHART

It's not that simple... we can't appear too eager... we string him along and the price goes up... don't you see that?

FRASER

But what if he pulls out? It's too much of a gamble... we think you should ask him what he has to offer... right now.

URQUHART

Is it a pint for you Iain, or a half?

IAIN

Just a half... and a whisky.

URQUHART

Give us a hand will you Roddy?

RODDY comes round to the other side of the counter and helps URQUHART pour the drinks.

URQUHART

I told you I needed your trust... and your patience... let me take the strain for a day or so... relax... give until the ceilidh at least... twenty-four hours...

FRASER

Ok Gordon... we'll talk at the ceilidh.

Just then MAC comes into the bar. URQUHART moves along the counter to join him. He greets him pleasantly.

URQUHART

Nice to see you in here Mr Macintyre.

MAC is still clinking with his pockets full of coins. He sits in a bar stool away from the local group.

URQUHART

I want you to try this.

He brings an old dust-covered bottle to the counter.

SCENE SIXTY-EIGHT continued

URQUHART

The Macaskill. Forty-two years old... a pure malt whisky.

MAC

Old enough to be out on its own.

URQUHART

Very true.

URQUHART pours out two glasses of the stuff.

URQUHART

Slange!

MAC

Yeh!

They drink. URQUHART gets down to business.

URQUHART

I want to talk to you.

MAC

Good.

URQUHART

Some people are concerned about your interest in the place... it's not just a metter of fixing a price... there are emotions to be considered... people get attached to a place like this...

MAC

I can appreciate that.

URQUHART

I have to be able to offer them more than just money...

MAC

How about more money?

This kind of talk stimulates URQUHART.

SCENE SIXTY-EIGHT continued

URQUHART

Let's talk... outside.

He calls over to RODDY.

URQUHART

Look after the bar Roddy.

MAC and URQUHART drain their glasses and leave the bar.

The group of locals are left to worry and drink some more.

SCENE SIXTY-NINE

FERNESS BEACH. TWILIGHT.

A Scottish twilight is a protracted thing. In high summer it is a matter of three or four hours of lingering light, a delicate and beautiful light that is called the "gloaming".

Harry Lauder used to sing about roaming in it.

MAC and URQUHART are roaming in it, on the beach.

The feel of the place is at odds with the matter-of-fact tone of their business discussion. On the sound track their words will fight with the natural sounds of the sea-wash and the evening birds. At times one will dominate the other.

The beach itself will become a third party to the conversation, eavesdropping on the discussion of its own fate.

URQUHART

It's not a matter of buying off peoples' feelings... it's not as crude as that... it's more a way of taking feelings into account.

MAC

I agree.

URQUHART

We're talking about massive disturbance... a way of life changing... re-settlement... lives being re-started...

MAC

Sounds like a lot of money... the way you put it...

SCENE SIXTY-NINE continued

URQUHART

One way, it strikes me, might be a trust fund, over and above a purchase price... a way of letting the community feel involved in the place... say a lump sum plus a percentage of profits over ten or twenty years. With some local trustees and some Knox ones.

MAC

We have to settle on a basic price first. Then I'll know how I can accomodate the frills.

URQUHART

Ok. I'll get you a fixed price, averaging over the whole area.

MAC

Good.

A flock of oystercatchers rises into the air from the shore and wheels overhead, with their collective evening cry.

URQUHART

We have to be talking about millions...

MAC

Maybe.

URQUHART

What kind of millions do you reckon we're talking about?

MAC

Oh, we'll have to talk about that.

URQUHART

I was thinking of maybe a target figure of twenty... million...

MAC

For the trust?

URQUHART

For the community, yes.

MAC

Dollars... maybe.

SCENE SEVENTY

CLIFF BEACH. GLOAMING.

OLDSEN has returned to the cliff, to the spot where MARINA left him. The place has a magnetism for him now.

The first bright stars of evening are penetrating the still-blue sky.

OLDSEN is alert. Every plop and gurgle of the gentle sea might herald the arrival of MARINA, on a night exercise.

The far horizon is rimmed with red and gold, the sun just below the dip in the sea.

SCENE SEVENTY-ONE

FERNESS BEACH. GLOAMING.

MAC and URQUHART have been attracted by the light of the open fire outside THE BEACHCOMBER'S SHACK.

They make their way towards it. THE BEACHCOMBER, BEN, is sitting by the fire.

URQUHART

Evening Ben.

BEN

It's a pleasant night Gordon.

URQUHART

This is Macintyre. He's staying with us for a time.

BEN

I'd offer you some tea but I only have one other cup.

URQUHART

We don't mind sharing.

MAC

Not in the least... but no sugar...

SCENE SEVENTY-ONE continued

BEN fetches his other cup and pours the tea. URQUHART hands the cup to MAC for the first sip. The evening atmosphere and the sense of formality in the men's behaviour, the cup passing back and forth between MAC and URQUHART, lends a mystical, ceremonial flavour to the scene.

URQUHART

Macintyre was asking me how much I thought the bay was worth Ben.

BEN starts to laugh very heartily. It takes him a long while to stop. MAC and URQUHART sit it out, while BEN laughs their dealing into silliness.

BEN

That's a good one Gordon.

BEN is still laughing through his words.

BEN

What did you want to fix a price on... was it the sand, or the water... or just everything?

MAC

Just everything.

SCENE SEVENTY-TWO

CLIFF BEACH. GLOAMING.

OLDSEN is sitting on the rock that he left MARINA at. The seabirds are silent now, and the only natural sound is of the lapping of the wavelets.

The sound of BEN'S laughter can be heard also. A hollow, almost inhuman sound by the time it reaches OLDSEN.

SCENE SEVENTY-THREE

BEN'S BEACH. GLOAMING.

The three men are quieter now. The sky is blacker and more stars are appearing.

MAC

D'you know about the stars Ben?

SCENE SEVENTY-THREE continued

BEN

I know my way around this sky.

MAC

How about comets? Any around?

BEN

You want to buy a comet too?

MAC

Maybe.

BEN

If you want a comet all you have to do is look long enough... in the right place.

MAC

Where would you look?

BEN

If I had the inclination I would look in Leo... but it seems like an awful lot of trouble, just to find a comet.

MAC

What about Virgo?

URQUHART

You didn't mention comets before Macintyre. You're opening up a whole new area of negotiation.

MAC has to check to see if URQUHART is joking. He senses that he is, although URQUHART keeps a straight face.

MAC smiles. So does URQUHART.

URQUHART

We'll leave you in peace now Ben... and listen, we're having a ceilidh tomorrow, after Mac and I have tidied up some work... you'll come...

BEN

I'll be there Gordon, you can count on it.

SCENE SEVENTY-THREE continued

URQUHART

Goodnight Ben.

MAC

Goodnight sir.

MAC and URQUHART walk off in the direction of the village.

SCENE SEVENTY-FOUR

BEACH. NIGHT.

MAC and URQUHART are walking along the shoreline.

MAC

What a great old man... I thought he was just a... just a...

URQUHART

A bum?

MAC

Yeh... Jesus look!

MAC stops in his tracks, looking up at the sky. URQUHART sees them too. At first they come in ones and twos, but gradually they increase in frequency and numbers.

They witness a spectacular meteor shower.

MAC

Christ Jesus!

URQUHART

Calm down... it's just a meteor shower.

SCENE SEVENTY-FIVE

CLIFF BEACH. NIGHT.

OLDSEN sits on his rock, transfixed by the vision of sky and stars and meteors above him.

SCENE SEVENTY-SIX

HOTEL INTERIOR. DAY.

OLDSEN is in his bath, but he seems to be performing some kind of exercise rather than washing. He holds his head under the water for as long as he can, little bubbles of air escaping from his mouth as he does so. Then he raises his head out of the water, takes a huge breath, and tries again.

SCENE SEVENTY-SEVEN

HOTEL DINING ROOM. DAY.

MAC and OLDSEN and URQUHART are at their breakfast ritual once more.

MAC senses that something is up with OLDSEN. He takes sidelong looks at him as they sip their coffee. OLDSEN is vaguely aware of MAC'S suspicious scrutiny, and gets a little uncomfortable.

He tries to ease the atmosphere with some small talk.

OLDSEN

Did you know that under water everything looks twenty-five per cent bigger?

MAC looks at him with a straight look.

MAC

Sure I knew that. That's why we used to go skinny dipping.

The joke, if it is one, or at least the eccentricity of the statement, sails way over OLDSEN'S head.

They continue their breakfast in silence.

SCENE SEVENTY-EIGHT

FERNESS EXTERIOR. DAY.

Outside the Hotel MAC is watching OLDSEN as he races past the jetty and onto the beach, heading in the direction of the cliffs.

MAC is baffled.

SCENE SEVENTY-EIGHT continued

MAC isn't really aware of the telephone ringing in the 'phone box. GIDEON sprints from his boat to answer it. Then he leaves the 'phone box and shouts on MAC.

GIDEON

Mr Macintyre! Telephone! A Mr Houston!

MAC crosses over to the 'phone box just as the morning jet bombers scream overhead.

MAC is more casually dressed this morning. He isn't wearing a necktie or the jacket of his business suit.

SCENE SEVENTY-NINE

This scene will intercut between MAC in the PHONE BOX and HAPPER IN HOUSTON.

It is night in HOUSTON. HAPPER is in his PENTHOUSE OFFICE.

MAC

Macintyre... hello?

HAPPER

This is Happer. How are things?

Outside the 'phone box GIDEON has started his paint job. He smiles in at MAC throughout the following conversation.

MAC

Sir! They're fine! The deal is about there!

HAPPER

What about the sky?

MAC

The sky sir is amazing. There seems to be a lot happening in it, all the time... last night it was a meteor shower... it was spectacular...

HAPPER

Where was the shower Macintyre... where?

MAC

In the sky... they came down...

HAPPER

Which part of the sky?

SCENE SEVENTY-NINE continued

MAC

I don't know exactly sir... but I've been told that comet-wise Leo might be worth a look... should I switch from Virgo? I'll have more time when we finalise the deal...

HAPPER

Do both Macintyre... Leo and Virgo... keep at it.

MAC

You ever seen a meteor shower sir?

HAPPER

Once or twice... it's a sight worth seeing... I know how you feel...

MAC

Yes Mr Happer.

HAPPER

I'll keep in touch.

We stay with HAPPER in his penthouse as he puts down the telephone.

It is past office-time, and HAPPER is alone in his suite.

He wanders out onto the balcony. Above him the sky is a blank thing. The ambient light from the streets and traffic kills any life in the visible stars.

The hum of the traffic reaches him this high up. He goes inside.

SCENE EIGHTY

HAPPER PENTHOUSE. KITCHEN.

HAPPER the billionaire is making himself an omelette. He knows his way around the kitchen, and seems to have made an omelette before.

The telephone rings. He takes the call on the kitchen extension.

HAPPER

Yes?

SCENE EIGHTY continued

The voice is MORITZ'S

MORITZ

Happer?

HAPPER

Yes?

MORITZ

You're a shit Happer, a useless piece of crap... have I told you that already today?

HAPPER

Get off the 'phone Moritz... I don't need you any more... you're not getting paid... leave me alone...

MORITZ

It worked again Mr Happer... this is doing more good, I mean harm, than the formal sessions.

HAPPER

There are no sessions any more... leave me alone Moritz... I'll call the police... this is harrassment!

MORITZ

Asshole Happer! You love it! Craphound!

HAPPER puts down the telephone. He goes back to making his omelette.

After a few moments of this he tentatively picks up the receiver again and puts it to his ear. After a second or two he gets the voice again.

MORITZ

I'm still here Happer, and you're still a a useless mother...

HAPPER slams down the telephone.

SCENE EIGHTY-ONE

FERNESS CLIFF BEACH. DAY

SCENE EIGHT-ONE continued

OLDSEN is here. He has an expectant look about him. He is waiting for the girl from the sea.

He doesn't wait long. Behind him he hears a disturbance in the water. When he turns round he sees the vision of MARINA emerging from the sea and wading towards him.

We share the image with him. There is something ageless about its magic.

But our MARINA seems to be flesh and blood, and a practical girl. She is pretty down to earth when she greets OLDSEN.

MARINA

You seem to like this spot.

OLDSEN

I like the scenery.

MARINA smiles.

MARINA

Taking care of business?

OLDSEN would prefer not to dally with the subject of business, and the plans of MARINA'S that he is compromising.

OLDSEN

Mac's hard at it.

MARINA

Good.

OLDSEN

How's the ocean business?

MARINA

I think I'll take it easy this morning.

This might very well be in the nature of an invitation. OLDSEN siezes the chance anyway.

OLDSEN

How about playing teacher?

MARINA

What are you short of lessons on?

SCENE EIGHTY-ONE continued

OLDSEN

Most things... but my speciality is in being ignorant about the sea... stuff like that...

MARINA thinks about it.

OLDSEN

I'll trade you some conversational Japanese... Get you by in the Sea of Japan...

MARINA smiles.

MARINA

OK it's a deal... you'll have to get wet though...

SCENE EIGHTY-TWO

BEACH. DAY.

MAC is on the beach alone. He watches the seabirds, and skims some stones. He gets his feet wet. He inhabits the beach in a very personal and even childish way.

From near his shack BEN watches him. They exchange a wave. For all his wordly wisdom BEN falls short on dignity when it comes to getting in and out of his house. He neglected to build a door into it, so he comes and goes via the front window.

MAC takes off his electronic alarm watch and places it on a rock while he wades out into the water looking for shells.

He wanders far along the beach. Beyond him out at sea two unfamiliar boats are making their way towards the bay.

SCENE EIGHTY-THREE

RUSSIAN TRAWLER. WHEELHOUSE. DAY.

CAPTAIN VICTOR PINOCHKIN is in the WHEELHOUSE. He selects a channel on the shortwave radio. When he starts to transmit he sounds like a CB freak.

SCENE EIGHTY-THREE continued

VICTOR

Vulgar Boatman to Bluebeard... riding on channel four... you copy Bluebeard come back?

VICTOR has to try another channel.

VICTOR

Bluebeard from Vulgar Boatman... channel six for a QRK... come back Bluebeard... you got it...

This time he gets a reply through the static.

BLUEBEARD

Bluebeard to Boatman... you're wall to wall this channel... what's your twenty? Come back good buddy...

VICTOR

Breaker Boatman... we're half an hour from Sweethaven good buddy... planning a visit... picked up some modulations on your coming ceilidh... you copy?

BLUEBEARD

Welcome to democracy Boatman... we'll sink one with you tonight come back?

VICTOR

Roger dodger Bluebeard... 'til tonight... Vulgar Boatman final.

VICTOR switches off the CB rig and issues some instructions to his wheelman, in Russian.

VICTOR

Three-quarter speed now... we'll anchor in the bay and take the launch in.

Then he takes up the microphone again and talks in Russian to\his sister ship alongside.

VICTOR

Peter I'm going in for a day or so. See you at the weekend in Stornoway ok?

SCENE EIGHTY-FOUR

FERNESS. DAY.

MRS FRASER emerges from the door of her shop. She shouts across the street to RODDY on the jetty.

MRS FRASER

Roddy! Tell Gordon Urquhart! The Russians are coming!

SCENE EIGHTY-FIVE

CLIFF BEACH. DAY

MARINA is showing OLDSEN some of her treasures. She has taken him to a cove on the headland where the seals come ashore to bask in the shallows at low tide.

They are stalking the seals. They slide over the rocks on their bellies to get close to them.

Twenty or more seals are lying amongst the rocks. They look like so many black bananas, as they hold their tails and heads well up, resting only on their middles. The incoming waves gently loll them around. It seems to be part of the fun for the seals. One or two other seals are bobbing in the water close to the shore, eyeing up MARINA and OLDSEN.

MARINA whispers to OLDSEN.

MARINA

Grey seals.

OLDSEN

They look nice and friendly.

MARINA

A salmon fisherman would shoot them on sight. They steal his fish and ruin his nets... and they know what they're doing... they're rascals... but we keep an eye on them... only fifty thousand left in the Atlantic now.

OLDSEN

Sailors used to think they were mermaids yeh?

SCENE EIGHTY-FIVE continued

MARINA

They did... but they were wrong.

SCENE EIGHTY-SIX

FERNESS. DAY.

CAPTAIN PINOCHKIN'S BOAT is anchored in the bay. He has come ashore in a small launch. URQUHART is on the jetty to greet him. VICTOR is carrying a briefcase and three bottles.

URQUHART and VICTOR meet. They embrace.

URQUHART

Good to see you Victor.

VICTOR

Watch the booze Gordon... carry these...

He gives URQUHART two of the bottles. They walk in the direction of the hotel.

VICTOR

This is Plum Brandy, for Stella. The rest is the usual. How are things? I heard about the ceilidh.

URQUHART

There's lots to tell you... we've been invaded by America... we're all going to be rich... we won't have anywhere to call home... but we'll be stinking rich.

URQUHART

Are the Americans here?

URQUHART

Just one... and a Scots kid... they're on the beach somewhere... they've taken to going for long walks...

URQUHART sees MAC waddling around on the beach in the middle distance, looking for all the world like the original BEACHCOMBER.

SCENE EIGHTY-SIX continued

URQUHART

That's father christmas out there... you'll meet him later.

SCENE EIGHTY-SEVEN

BEACH. DAY.

MAC is heading back to the village. He is clutching an arm-ful of flotsam from the shore, shells and stones and even extra-specially interesting bits of seaweed.

MAC is splashing in and out of the wavelets in a distracted kind of way.

In the background BEN is watching MAC from just outside his shack.

SCENE EIGHTY-EIGHT

BEACH. DAY.

Further back along the beach we find MAC'S watch perched on the rock where he left it. The tide is coming in and the rock will soon be submerged.

The watch is sounding its alarm on its own behalf. It repeats again and again the opening bars of THE YELLOW ROSE OF TEXAS in a panic. Its little cadnium heart will keep it alive and singing under the waves for weeks and weeks.

Maybe MARINA and the seals will appreciate it.

The water covers the watch completely and the tune becomes water and hollow sounding.

SCENE EIGHTY-NINE

CLIFF BEACH. DAY.

The pixilation of OLDSEN continues. He and MARINA are resting on some rocks. True to his word he is trading her some Japanese words for her lesson on the seals.

She is enjoying his attentions and silliness. She is drifting into a pleasant stupor in the warmth of the late morning. They are lying side by side but in opposite directions, his head beside her feet and vice versa. This way they can lift their heads when they want to look at each other.

SCENE EIGHTY-NINE continued

OLDSEN is in love. MARINA might be in about six months.

OLDSEN

Otoko...

He points to himself.

OLDSEN

Me... otoko...

MARINA

Otoko.

OLDSEN

You... onna...

MARINA

Onna... me.

OLDSEN

Ooooonna... Ooooonna.

MARINA

Ooooonna... Otoko.

OLDSEN stretches out his arm to the sea.

OLDSEN

Paiyoo...

He points to MARINA and makes swimming motions.

OLDSEN

Marina... Paiyoo... Sakana... Asika... Azarisi.

MARINA

Me... Sakana... Asika... Azarisi.

OLDSEN turns his attention of MARINA'S leg. He is leaning on one elbow. He runs his hand lightly down the length of her leg.

OLDSEN

Asi... Asi.

SCENE EIGHTY-NINE continued

He gets bolder and lays a gentle kiss somewhere in the region of her knee.

OLDSEN

Kisu.

MARINA pretends that she doesn't understand.

MARINA

Ki-su?

So OLDSEN kisses her again. Teaching by example.

OLDSEN

Kisu... Kisu. Seppum.

Having cracked the ice rather pleasantly OLDSEN kisses her leg more, moving down towards the ankle. At this stage OLDSEN is kissing more rubber than flesh. He licks his lips.

OLDSEN

You taste salty.

MARINA

You're on the fresh side.

This mild cautioning only arouses OLDSEN to more caresses. He starts to kiss her foot, handling it delicately, like a flower. He plants kisses on her ankle and her upper foot.

Then he gets to work on her toes, kissing them individually, As he gives each toe his full attention, parting them one by one, he notices something mind-reelingly odd.

MARINA'S feet are webbed. Fine skin spans the area between her spreading toes.

MARINA lifts her head to OLDSEN.

MARINA

Sakana? Azarasi?

OLDSEN shakes his head.

OLDSEN

Ningyo.

MARINA

Ningyo... ningyo...

SCENE EIGHT-NINE continued

MARINA likes the sound of the Japanese word for mermaid.

She repeats it once or twice to herself. Then she lays her head back down on the rock and gazes up into the sky. She hums a soft lilting tune to herself.

Beyond them OLDSEN notices the seals bobbing in the water.

SCENE NINETY

HOTEL INTERIOR. DAY.

URQUHART and VICTOR are having a business conversation in the empty bar.

As they talk various papers are passing between them, with VICTOR signing some of them as he scans them.

URQUHART

I've left all of last year's money on short term deposit...it didn't seem worthwhile moving it into stock... didn't know when you might want it.

VICTOR

Wouldn't it work harder on the money market?

URQUHART

The amounts don't justify it Victor. You're only talking about a few thousand. Besides, the dollar is all over the place just now... it would be a full time job monitoring it... Maybe I'm getting lazy.

VICTOR

No, I see what you mean.

URQUHART

You should think again about some property... I should be pretty liquid once this Knox thing goes through... you could come in with me...

VICTOR

You know I'm a cash man Gordon... I'll have to think about it.

SCENE NINETY continued

MAC comes into the bar. He is making an excellent job of his imitation of a beach bum. His clothes are wet, he is unshaven, and he is carrying his morning's collection of flotsam from the beach. Not the perfect image of an Oil and Gas Executive.

URQUHART

Mac... come and meet Victor... Victor Pinochkin.

MAC approaches and holds out his free hand to VICTOR.

MAC

Macintyre... Knox Oil and Gas Houston.

VICTOR

Pinochkin... Russian Fishing Fleet Murmansk.

MAC looks suspiciously at URQUHART, not knowing if this is an elaborate joke. URQUHART merely smiles.

VICTOR

I'm here for the ceilidh... we've been buying some fish in the Minch. You're doing some business too I believe?

MAC

Yes.

MAC feels a little uncomfortable.

MAC

I'll go upstairs... I want to wash out these shells... see you later.

URQUHART

Come down for a drink later Mac.

VICTOR engages MAC before he has a chance to leave.

VICTOR

What've you got there? Is that a scallop shell?

MAC is obliged to let VICTOR examine his treasures.

SCENE NINETY *continued*

VICTOR

Nice one... this is a razor fish or razor clam... they call them spoots around here. You can eat them... catching them's the problem though... they jet through the sand. Strong little things...

MAC tries to gain some moral ground.

MAC

I wouldn't want to eat them...

He makes his exit now.

MAC

See you later.

Even URQUHART isn't sure if VICTOR was baiting MAC on purpose, or if the conversation was an innocent one.

SCENE NINETY-ONE

MAC'S BEDROOM. DAY.

MAC is cleaning his shells at the washbasin. He is using his toothbrush to clear out the sand and grit.

Suddenly OLDSEN comes into the room. He is in a state of excitement and is trying hard to damp it down. He is like a kid torn between the desire to tell a sworn secret and the need to keep a secret of it. The result is a state of not quite supressed hysteria.

He joins MAC at the washbasin and watches him at work.

OLDSEN

Hey, that's a ribbed mussel... nice...

MAC is getting a little piqued at all these experts who want to muscle in on his collection.

MAC

Yeh, yeh... and this is a scallop.

OLDSEN

A bay scallop I would say.

MAC ignores him.

SCENE NINETY-ONE continued

MAC

And this is a razor shell.

He mimes a throat-cutting action on himself with the shell.

This action sobers the conversation.

OLDSEN

How's business? Need any help?

MAC

Urquhart's got all the powers of attorney... we'll have a draft agreement by tonight.

OLDSEN speaks without enthusiasm.

OLDSEN

So we've swung it?

MAC

Looks like it.

OLDSEN

No opposition at all?

MAC

They'll have a good deal. We're not robbing anybody.

MAC and OLDSEN are on the brink of being honest with one another, but the moment passes.

OLDSEN

Do they know what's going to happen to the place?

MAC

They're going to be rich, that's all they know.

OLDSEN

Could I borrow your ribbed mussel... I want to show it to someone.

MAC

You'll bring it back?

SCENE NINETY-ONE continued

OLDSEN

First thing tomorrow.

MAC

Ok.

MAC dries the shell on his shirt and gives it to OLDSEN.

OLDSEN

Thanks.

MAC

You speak Russian?

OLDSEN

Yes, that's one of mine...

MAC

You want my scallop too?

OLDSEN

No, no thanks... just the mussel.

MAC

See you at the celidh then.

OLDSEN

Right.

OLDSEN leaves the room. MAC resumes his work at the basin.

SCENE NINETY-TWO

FERNESS. EVENING.

Near the JETTY, GIDEON is putting the finishing touches to yet another name on his boat. This time it is called MAID OF MURMANSK.

OLDSEN is with him, watching him at work. It is a while before he speaks.

SCENE NINETY-TWO continued

OLDSEN

You know anything about mermaids Gideon?

GIDEON works on for a while before answering.

GIDEON

What would you like to know?

OLDSEN

Do they... exist?

GIDEON gives a low chuckle.

GIDEON

You wouldn't be asking me about them if they didn't... would you now?

OLDSEN is stopped in his tracks by this Gaelic logic.

GIDEON

There are two types... the home breakers and the home makers... There was one I heard of when I was a boy... up the coast. The Macleod brothers found her on the beach one morning. She stayed with them for over forty years, married the younger one... and they had some family...

OLDSEN

She would be a home maker?

GIDEON

I would say so.

OLDSEN

And the other kind?

GIDEON gestures towards the sea and shakes his head.

GIDEON

If one takes a liking to you... she won't be content until you're in there with her...

OLDSEN

What are they like?

SCENE NINETY-ONE continued

GIDEON

Just as confusing as mortal women I would say... but probably more of a handful at the end of the day.

OLDSEN

Are you being serious with me?

GIDEON gives him a straight look.

GIDEON

I think so.

The sounds of the ceilidh are drifting down from the village hall.

OLDSEN

See you later.

OLDSEN leaves GIDEON for the ceilidh.

GIDEON picks up the tune from the ceilidh and begins to hum it to himself as he works on.

SCENE NINETY-THREE

THE CEILIDH. VILLAGE HALL.

The essence of a Ceilidh is participation. You participate just as long as you can stand up. Participation can range from singing elaborate Gaelic songs to solo highland dancing to making a general exhibition of yourself.

There is also a musical group attempting to provide the event with a thread of continuity. Tonight the group are the local ACE TONES. It says so on the big drum. The big drum is never played in this group. The drummer gives his fellow musicians their strict backing beat solely on the small kettle drum.

Also in the group are a guitarist/vocalist, a banjo player, a pianist who spends most of his energies putting some vigour into the rhythm section, and an accordianist.

They can cope with the huge range of musical styles that crop up at a celidh, from traditional highland melody to current pop hits, by way of country and western and Tom Jones' classics.

SCENE NINETY-THREE continued

There is an added flavour to the celebrations tonight. Just about everyone in the place is on the verge of great wealth. It is like a convention of football pools winners. This ceilidh could be destined for the history books, if anyone has enough brain cells left in the morning to remember it.

When OLDSEN joins the party MAC and URQUHART are already hard at work in a corner, putting the final touches to the deal over a drink.

SCENE NINETY-FOUR

CEILIDH.

MAC and URQUHART are huddled over their drinks and papers. The activity of the ceilidh goes on around them.

URQUHART

... If we call the useless land, the beach and the cliffs, one third of the price of the working land and the village, we can get the average price of two thousand per acre... the good land makes up the difference with the property premium, so everybody's happy... what d'you say?

MAC doesn't seem too involved in the dealing.

MAC

Sounds fine.

URQUHART

And then I'm asking for a tiny tiny five per cent of revenue over ten years... on top of the ten million at the start...

MAC replies blankly.

MAC

I can't say on the percentage... we don't have projections for ten years yet... but you can have the ten million, plus some form of participation to be mutually... etc, etc.

MAC seems more interested in his rapidly emptying glass.

SCENE NINETY-FIVE

CEILIDH.

At the food table BEN is finding it difficult to lay aside his acquisitive habits, born from years of beach combing.

He is scanning the spread of sandwiches and cakes with a clear keen eye. He pockets a large selection of sandwiches and the less creamy of the cakes, going mostly for the dry scones and sponges. He is wearing a multi-pocketed jacket for the occasion.

SCENE NINETY-SIX

CEILIDH.

On stage, VICTOR PENOCHKIN is about to sing a traditional Russian song accompanied by the ACE TONES. He sings with feeling and some skill. The song will cover the following two or three scenes, with occasional references back to VICTOR at the microphone.

SCENE NINETY-SEVEN

CEILIDH.

MAC is at the makeshift bar reinforcing his drink.

RODDY is working as barman.

MAC

Give me a forty-two year old whisky Roddy.

RODDY

Sorry Mr Mac, we don't have any tonight.

MAC

Well, give me four eight year olds and a ten year old...

RODDY seems happy with this solution.

RODDY

That adds up.

He gets to work on MAC'S order

MAC

And give me some million year old water...

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SCENE NINETY-EIGHT

CEILIDH.

The REV MAC has been collared by one of his very young parishioners, a teenage boy, emboldened by an illicit drink or two.

The boy appears to have THE REV engaged in intense conversation.

BOY

There's a lot of uncovering of nakedness going on in the old testement Reverend... mostly between pages ninety-eight and a hundred and forty... have you noticed?

REV MAC

You must try to see beyond the written word Andrew... if God talks about nakedness then be assured he's got a very good reason for it.

BOY

Have you got any bibles with pictures?

SCENE NINETY-NINE

CEILIDH.

MAC is back in the corner with URQUHART.

URQUHART

Come on Mac, we're still negotiating... what do you say?

MAC

What do I say what?

URQUHART

Let's haggle... dollars or pounds... the two thousand per and the ten million...

MAC shrugs his shoulders.

MAC

Pounds... let's say pounds...

URQUHART is confused by this senseless capitulation on the part of MAC. At the same time it rouses him because he senses that it might be a gambit.

SCENE NINETY-NINE continued

URQUHART

Come on Mac, are you taking me? How much have you got to play with? What's the game?

MAC'S indifference only confuses URQUHART more.

MAC

No game Gordon... call it anything you want. Pounds, Yen, Roubles... you name it...

MAC'S inscrutible behaviour will perplex URQUHART until his dying day.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED

CEILIDH.

OLDSEN is hovering near the door of the hall, looking into the crowd of the ceilidh. He is looking out for MARINA.

After a while he seems to make up his mind about something.

He leaves the hall discreetly, taking his drink with him.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND ONE

CEILIDH.

A ten year old girl is about to start her solo sword dance on the floor, surrounded by an admiring group.

The girl CATRIONA is in full highland dress, with kilt and velvet jacket and feathered hat. She is kitted out for her party piece. She wears a very serious expression on an otherwise angelic face. She is concentrating on the dance.

She is very very good. Her sword and scabbard are layed out on the floor in the shape of a cross and she performs her sword dance with grace and lightness. Her little feet seem to be hung on invisible threads as they hover and tap and toe over the sword.

Her face never loses its look of intense concentration.

For once the musical efforts of the ACE TONES seem to transcend blandness. The hesitant, lilting melody of the traditional tune fits perfectly the tentative movements of CATRIONA.

The growing audience is captivated, hushed.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND ONE continued

In the closing moments of the dance a slight movement of foot goes wrong for CATRIONA. A toe catches the edge of the sword and for a moment unbalances her.

She finishes her dance, bows, and picks up her sword and scabbard. She mutters to herself under her breath, but close enough to the REV MAC for him to overhear.

CATRIONA

Fuck!

The look of shock passes quickly over the REV MAC'S face as he takes the stage to add his own little bit to the general enjoyment.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND TWO

CEILIDH.

In the background the REV MAC begins his tuneful version of an old Gaelic song. He has a good voice and a good command of the language.

Near the bar two locals are discussing the Knox deal.

ARCHIE

Four generations of work on that farm... digging and draining and planting... years and years... and it comes to this...

He shakes his head. His friend is in a similar blank mood.

SANDY

Aye, strange times Archie. What did Gordon offer you?

ARCHIE doesn't change his gloomy expression.

ARCHIE

One and a half million cash plus two per-cent of the re-location fund, and a share in the oilfield revenues...

SANDY

Aye... strange times Archie, strange times...

They shake their heads gravely, and take another gulp from their adequately-filled glasses.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND THREE

CEILIDH

MAC and VICTOR are sitting at the ping-pong table. The little green net hasn't been removed from the table, and they are occupying opposite sides of it.

The drink doesn't appear to be lifting MAC'S spirits.

VICTOR looks at him sympathetically.

VICTOR

Cheer up. You've made everybody very happy.

MAC doesn't respond.

VICTOR

You're a success... cheers...

VICTOR raises his glass and drinks. MAC remains silent.

VICTOR gets a bit more serious.

VICTOR

It seems like paradise here Mac, but this place is dying on its feet...it needed you. It needs me and my fleet to come and buy fish here... it needs your factory... people will get jobs... you can't eat scenery...

MAC still doesn't react much.

VICTOR

It's their place Mac... they have a right to make what they can of it...

MAC smiles weakly at first, but it grows.

VICTOR

Cheers!

MAC

Yeh!

VICTOR

You speak a lot of sense, for an oil man.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND FOUR

FERNESS. EXTERIOR. NIGHT.

OLDSEN is taking the air. He still has his drink. He is still vaguely on the lookout for MARINA. Probably because he wants to see her more than he expects to see her.

The music from the hall fills part of the quiet of the night.

MARINA doesn't disappoint him. We hear her before we see her.

MARINA

Hello.

OLDSEN

Hi!

MARINA

Is everyone celebrating?

OLDSEN

Almost everyone.

MARINA

When do I get the good news?

OLDSEN has some tough explaining to do.

OLDSEN

I want to talk to you about that... there's a kind of alternative plan that's surfaced... Geddes at the Lab is in on it... he has all the details...

MARINA

What d'you mean?

OLDSEN

Some kind of terminal here... an oil thing.

If OLDSEN expected some kind of disturbed reaction from MARINA he doesn't get it. She takes the news as cool as a fish.

MARINA

I don't see that happening here... I don't see that at all.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND FOUR continued

MARINA'S coolness takes OLDSEN by surprise, but he doesn't have time to dwell on it. The sky interrupts him.

Over the bay the sky seems to come alive. Shivers of colour rain down from the heavens, reds and greens and blues.

It's like a waterfall and then again it's like a giant multi-coloured curtain blowing in some cosmic breeze. There is a faint rumbling sound that is more felt than heard. The sky seems to be dancing and making its own music.

OLDSEN is staggered. MARINA as ever is controlled, but not dis-interested. She is amused at OLDSEN'S amazement.

OLDSEN

Holy mackeral! What's happening!

MARINA looks at the sky with a familiarity.

MARINA

It's just the Northern Lights... Aurora Borealis... high energy protons and electrons spilling over into our atmosphere... they get through our magnetic shield where it's weak, at the poles...

OLDSEN'S eyes are set on the energised sky.

OLDSEN

It's still beautiful. I don't care what you call it. How often does this go on?

MARINA

Any old time... although it's best when the sun's kicking up a magnetic storm... that gets the solar wind up and that's where the protons come from.

OLDSEN

You say the darndest things Marina...

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND FIVE

FERNESS. EXTERIOR. NIGHT.

MAC and URQUHART are outside the ceilidh hall. MAC is transfixed by the sight of the sky also. URQUHART, like MARINA, has seen it all before, but is still taken in by it.

As if being familiar with it somehow added to the effect.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND FIVE continued

URQUHART is still wearing the accordian he was playing inside with the band. His own party piece.

URQUHART

That's the Northern Lights Mac.

MAC

What the heck is it?

URQUHART

It's pretty technical. Nice though isn't it...

MAC is already sprinting for the 'phone booth. The sky persists with its dancing. MAC keeps the door of the booth open with his foot while he dials the long Houston code. He keeps his eyes on the sky while digging in his pockets for change.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND SIX

KNOX OIL AND GAS. HOUSTON. DAY INTERIOR.

HAPPER'S OFFICE.

MRS WYATT has taken the call from MAC.

MRS WYATT

Mr Macintyre in Scotland, Mr Happer... should I transfer him to Mr Fountain?

HAPPER

No, no... let me have him.

MRS WYATT connects HAPPER with MAC. The telephone dialogue will take place intercutting between HOUSTON and FERNESS.

HAPPER

Happer here Macintyre.

To begin with we stay with HAPPER when MAC speaks. The excitement in MAC'S voice, the mixture of Aurora Borealis and forty-two year old whisky, can be felt all the way to HOUSTON.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND SIX continued

MAC

I'm watching the sky sir, and it's doing some amazing things... it has everything... reds, greens... kind of shimmering... there's a noise too, like a far away thunder except it's softer than that... I wish you could see it... I wish I could describe it just like I'm seeing it...

HAPPER

Be specific Macintyre... you're my eyes and ears there... give me details...

Beyond the 'phone booth URQUHART is leaning on a low wall picking out a tune on his accordian.

MAC tries to live the experience for HAPPER five thousand miles away.

MAC

I'll give you the colours first sir... it's red, white, green and blue right now... and it's like a kind of shower of colour...

URQUHART calls over to MAC.

URQUHART

Tell him it's the Aurora Borealis...

MAC

I have some more information now sir... it's the Aurora Borealis... but it's beautiful...

HAPPER

You're a lucky man Macintyre... I haven't seen the Aurora since fifty-three, in Alaska...

MAC

I haven't seen a comet yet sir... I don't know if I'd spot one through all this other stuff... God... look at that... it went red all over just now... red all over...

Back in HOUSTON, HAPPER is distracted from his conversation with MAC. Something has caught his attention at the window.

MORITZ is on the other side of the glass, suspended forty floors above ground in a maintenance gondola. He holds up

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND SIX continued

a large hand written sign for HAPPER to see. The sign is so long that MORITZ has to feed it through his hands to let HAPPER read it a few letters at a time. HAPPER reads and MORITZ smiles a sickly triumphant smile:

F-E-L-I-X H-A-P-P-E-R I-S A M-O-T-H-E-R F-U...

HAPPER races for the window and tries to claw at MORITZ through the double insulated hurricane-proof glass. Outside MORITZ is attaching one end of the sign to the building.

HAPPER is working himself into an impotent fury. He throws useless objects at the reinforced window, pencils, books, flowers.

At last he has the sense to operate the automatic blinds.

MORITZ vanishes from sight, still smiling.

HAPPER gathers his wits and calms himself. He makes a couple of decisions in his head. He raises MRS WYATT on the 'phone.

HAPPER

Mrs Wyatt, I'm leaving the office, in fact I'm leaving Houston... I'm leaving the country too... get Crabbe to watch things for a while, and I want the Learjet ready for a trip to Washington... and I want a connection to Europe... London... Scotland... get me on the Concorde flight this afternoon...

HAPPER adds an afterthought.

HAPPER

Also there's a maniac on the outside of the building... call the Police Department... get some marksmen... shoot him off... shoot to kill.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVEN

FERNESS. EXTERIOR. NIGHT.

MAC has joined URQUHART sitting on the wall. The Northern Lights are still flashing their brilliance across the sky.

URQUHART is pretty drunk. MAC is very drunk. MAC is fast approaching the sentimental stage of the affliction. What he chooses to get sentimental about is FERNESS.

URQUHART listens to MAC in silence, still picking out a tune on his accordian.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVEN continued

MAC

Oh Gordon... Oh Gordon.

MAC lets out a big sigh. Then he seems to gather his feelings.

MAC

I have a proposition Gordon. I may be a bit tipsy, but I mean it... and I want you to consider it seriously... ok?

URQUHART nods slowly.

MAC

I want to swap with you... everything... I want to stay here and run the hotel.. and do some bits of business... you can go back to Houston... take the Porsche... the house... the job... it's a good life there Gordon... I pull thirty thousand a year... plus what let me run up on the American Express... and I have about fifty thousand of mixed securities, not including the house... I want you to have it all... and there's no credit due on the car - it's pure ownership... and I won't let down your good name here Gordon... I'll make a good Gordon... I'll be a credit to you... what d'you say pal?

URQUHART is silent for a moment.

URQUHART

What about Stella?

MAC

I was coming to that... I love her, very very much... she's wonderful... she's the most beautiful woman I've ever loved... she brings out the best feeling in me Gordon ... and I think she knows it... I want you to leave Stella here with me... will you leave Stella here with me Gordon?

URQUHART

Why sure Mac.

MAC

You're a good guy Gordon.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHT

FERNESS. EXTERIOR. MORNING.

It is a calm, still morning. The village is quieter than usual because most people are sleeping off the effects of the Ceilidh.

Two figures are sitting on a rock near the jetty. They are MAC and VICTOR. Beyond them the rehearsals for the Third World War are underway. From the far side of the distant cliff puffs of smoke and yellow flashes are seen. Dull thuds of explosions are heard.

MAC and VICTOR watch the bombing activity but don't register it as an out-of-the-ordinary event. It's just part of the scenery.

They have become friends of a sort. Their conversation is leisurely.

MAC

What kind of a car do you drive?

VICTOR

I share a Volvo 144 Estate with my brother-in-law. I don't need a car full time...

MAC

You get Volvos in Russia?

VICTOR

Sure... anything you want... we make Fiats and import just about all the rest...

MAC shows VICTOR his photograph of his Porsche. VICTOR must be considered a real friend to be allowed this privilege.

MAC

This is my car... a Targa...

VICTOR admires it.

VICTOR

Very nice.

MAC

That's my apartment in the back... the block at least... my balcony's round the corner here, on the sunny side...

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHT continued

VICTOR

What's the insurance like on a Porsche?

MAC

It's heavy, but I get a good deal through Knox Oil... we have insurance subsidiaries.

VICTOR

You got a Hi-fi?

MAC

Quad... and video... the video's only stereo though... state-of-the-art stuff...

VICTOR

I've got a quad outfit too... picked it up in Japan.

MAC gives VICTOR a card from his wallet.

MAC

This is my address in Houston Victor, if you ever come to the States... give me a call...

VICTOR

Let me give you my address in Murmansk too Mac. I'm not there a lot, but you never know. Give me some paper, or a card...

MAC gives VICTOR one of his cards to write on.

MAC

Come to think of it, I might never go home Victor... I might just stay here...

VICTOR

With the bombs and the oil?

MAC

Shit.

VICTOR

It's a living Mac, it's a living... and think of all that gas your Porsche needs...

MAC

How come you're here?

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHT continued

VICTOR

Fishing. We buy the Mackeral from the local boats before they land it... they fish for us... I've been coming here for years... I like it here... but it's a tough life for the locals... you should be proud of yourself... making them millionaires...

MAC

I don't know... I think we need places like this... places where things...stop... magic places...

VICTOR looks at MAC.

MAC

I didn't say things like this a week ago Victor... [redacted]

VICTOR

Alcohol and shell-shock...

As if to underline VICTOR'S point the bomb blasts from across the bay increase in intensity. Another low flying jet screams overhead to join the fun.

From the village URQUHART comes to join them. He is not as relaxed as the other two. He seems concerned about something.

VICTOR

Breakfast ready Gordon?

URQUHART doesn't respond to this.

URQUHART

We have a problem.

MAC

What?

URQUHART

The beach... Ben's beach.

MAC

What's the problem?

URQUHART

The problem is it really is Ben's beach...

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHT continued

URQUHART continued

he owns the shoreline... four miles of it, from the grass down to the low tide mark... I found it in the Parish Records when I was checking out some title deeds...

VICTOR

Can he prove it?

URQUHART

We can't steal the beach from him, Victor. It's his.

MAC

You'll have buy it from him.

URQUHART

I'll have to buy it from him?

MAC

The beach is part of the deal... it's in the deal already...

URQUHART thinks about this. They all have a think.

URQUHART

It's not in my budget... I thought the shore property covered the beach... I didn't make allowances for this...

MAC doesn't take the bait.

MAC

Work out a price Gordon... and juggle the figures... steal something from the trust fund capital... something...

VICTOR

Does he know he owns it?

URQUHART

Forget it Victor.

MAC

Victor's just trying to be practical... you have to think of something...

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHT continued

URQUHART

I thought we could just evict him... but this is different... can't you stick in some more money Mac... it's a new property after all...

MAC is holding out. He remains silent, trying to prove something, salvage something perhaps.

RODDY comes running down from the village.

RODDY

Phone call from America Mr Mac. a Mister Happer is coming to see you here... they said you should phone back...

MAC

Happer? You said Happer?

RODDY

H-A-P-P-E-R... they spelt it for me.

MAC

Jesus.

RODDY leaves them.

MAC

Ok Gordon... another million for the beach.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND NINE

FERNESS BEACH. DAY. BEN'S HOUSE. EXTERIOR.

MAC and VICTOR and URQUHART make a suspicious looking trio as they hover at BEN'S front door, or more correctly where his front door would be if he had one.

They look like a posse of insurance salesmen, or furniture re-possessors.

For some reason MAC is feeling morally uneasy about this one-to-one dealing situation. It shows in his behaviour.

MAC

One million sterling Gordon, not a penny more... after that you're on your own... and that includes the cliffs and the rocks... the big rocks as well...

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND NINE *continued*

URQUHART

Ok Mac... I've got the message.

VICTOR

Where's the door here?

URQUHART

There isn't one... just bang the window.

MAC

Jesus, how can you do business with someone who doesn't have a door...?

VICTOR

The ethics are just the same...

VICTOR is enjoying himself more than the other two.

URQUHART taps BEN'S window politely.

URQUHART

Ben... can I have a word with you?

After a moment BEN'S head appears at the window. He opens the window and sticks his head out.

URQUHART

Ben, hello. We want to talk to you... you know Macintyre... and this is Victor... Victor this is Ben Knox...

MAC

Your name is Knox?

BEN

Yes.

URQUHART

Can we come in Ben, or will you come out?

BEN clambers through the window frame to join them outside.

BEN

I'll get the fire going

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND NINE continued

He starts to kindle the cooking fire.

URQUHART

This is your beach, isn't it Ben.

BEN

Yes... it's been in the family for four hundred years... the Lord of The Isles gave it to an ancestor of mine... he helped him out with a spot of trouble... killed his brother for him... something like that.

VICTOR

You have a deed or anything... papers?

BEN

It's in the museum in Edinburgh... it's a historic document...

URQUHART is determined to get MAC in on the act.

URQUHART

Mac?

MAC

Yeh?

URQUHART

Don't you want to ask Ben about the place?

MAC has to drop his coyness.

MAC

Sure! Sure... Ben... what we wanted to ask you... Have you ever thought about... moving?

BEN is totally off their drift. He's not even at the stage of being baffled.

BEN

No.

URQUHART

Macintyre represents some people who think they have a use for the beach Ben... they want to pay you for using it...

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND NINE continued

BEN

Money?

URQUHART

A lot of money... a hundred thousand pounds.

BEN

I'm still working the place myself... it's my living you know... it supports me.

BEN looks at them appealingly, asking them to appreciate his logic.

URQUHART

You would have lots of money... you wouldn't have to work.

BEN

We've all got to work Gordon... and the beach needs to be worked... think of the state it would get into... I keep it good...

Our boys are really up against it.

VICTOR

Why don't we sit down round the fire...

BEN is getting to the perplexed stage now. He provides them with boxes and rocks to sit on. They settle down.

URQUHART

It would help the whole community if Mac could use the beach Ben... Mac... how about if you made it two hundred thousand for Ben?

MAC

Sure. Two hundred thousand Ben.

BEN

I'm sorry gentlemen... I can't... it's been in the family so long... I don't have the right...

VICTOR

You can make the family rich Mr Knox, that would be for the good eh?

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND NINE continued

BEN

Would you care for some tea gentlemen?

URQUHART

Yes please Ben.

The other two nod. Ben fixes up the kettle over the fire.

It looks as if they are in for a long hard session.

We pull back to a wider shot of the huddle of figures beside the fire, beside the shack.

We have even a wider shot of the shack and the beach, with the smoke beginning to rise from BEN'S fire.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND TEN

CLIFF BEACH. DAY.

OLDSEN and MARINA are playing games on the cliffs. MARINA in particular is enjoying herself.

OLDSEN

Listen... I'm serious... all the way along here... a half-mile long jetty, sunk well into the sand...

MARINA laughs.

OLDSEN

... and in here... tanks... million gallon tanks... and a refinery all the way there, for about a mile...

MARINA laughs louder.

OLDSEN

It's going to happen... It's serious...

MARINA gives him a wide-eyed serious look.

MARINA

It won't... never... ever.

OLDSEN is stuck for a response to the certainty in MARINA'S manner.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND ELEVEN

HOTEL DINING ROOM. DAY INTERIOR.

Another mealtime scene is being enacted. This time VICTOR has joined MAC and OLDSEN at the table.

They eat in silence, with URQUHART hovering around serving the food.

The muzak is playing softly.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND TWELVE

FERNESS. DAY. EXTERIOR.

Our intrepid trio are making their way back to BEN'S place for the resumption of the negotiations.

OLDSEN watches from the door of the hotel as they stride purposefully across the shingle. Lunch seems to have given them new vigour for the afternoon session. Or perhaps they are simply getting desperate.

OLDSEN is wearing URQUHART'S apron now. He throws the dish towel over his shoulder and goes back into the hotel to finish the washing up.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTEEN

BEN'S HOUSE. DAY EXTERIOR

MAC is getting down to business with BEN. VICTOR and URQUHART have moved some way off, leaving MAC to it.

MAC

Half a million pounds is a lot of money Ben... even enough to buy another beach with... look I've got some postcards...

MAC pulls out a handful of postcards from his pocket.

VICTOR and URQUHART watch from a safe distance.

BEN is polite enough to take an interest in MAC'S cards, although he's not sure what the point is. There is a trace of humouring in his treatment of MAC at this stage. He obviously thinks MAC is off his head.

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SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTEEN continued

MAC

I have some very fine beaches here Ben... and I want to make you an offer... how about this. Any beach that takes your fancy... anywhere in the world... I'll get it for you... look at this... Hawaii... I could get you five or six miles of Hawaii no problem... or, look here... Australia... look at that sand...

BEN studies the postcards.

MAC

Look at these rollers there... and palm trees.

BEN

They look like very nice beaches Mr Macintyre, but I only need the one... and I've got this here... I don't need another...

MAC's blank, almost defeated look makes BEN want to explain himself more.

BEN

Besides... I don't know if there's a living in any of these beaches... you have to go into that kind of thing in detail...

MAC

I'll buy you any beach you choose, Ben... and I'll give you seven hundred and fifty thousand pounds to set yourself up with... it'll give you some security in the early stages... what do you say.

Perhaps BEN senses that MAC is making fun of his feelings. He gets a bit more stony-faced himself.

BEN

You're good at talking with these big numbers Mr Macintyre... you're good with numbers aren't you?

MAC

It's part of my job, yes.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTEEN continued

BEN

Well... how about this then...

BEN scoops a fistful of sand from the beach.

BEN

Will you give me a pound note for every grain of sand I have in my hand? You can have the beach for that...

MAC is confused, awkward.

MAC

Come on Ben... we don't have to play games...

BEN

It's not a game... you like big numbers... you can have the beach for this handful of sand in pound notes...

MAC is in a stew. He couldn't make a guess at BEN'S grains of sand to within half a million. He has run out of expertise. BEN teases him. He fingers a few grains of sand and lets them spill back onto the beach.

BEN

There... saved you a few pounds.

MAC decides not to take the gamble.

MAC

I'm not here to play games Ben... we have to negotiate in a business-like way.

BEN lets the sand drop. He shakes his head slowly.

BEN

Oh dear... oh dear... you might have made a bery nice purchase there Mr Macintyre... I can't hold much more than ten thousand grains of sand at a time... did you think it would be a bigger number?

MAC

You took advantage of me Ben.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTEEN continued

BEN

Did I now?

MAC tries again.

MAC

How about a hatful of sand?

BEN

No. That wouldn't be business-like.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND FOURTEEN

HOTEL DINING ROOM. INTERIOR NIGHT.

The evening meal ritual. This time it is a little different.

BEN has come to join them at the table. URQUHART is also dining, along with MAC and VICTOR.

OLDSEN is doing the serving tonight.

BEN is enjoying himself. Enjoying the fuss being made of him, enjoying the food, and enjoying the fact that he knows he will never give in to their bullying.

The others aren't enjoying themselves so much. They are over-polite with BEN. URQUHART finds some relief in being able to boss OLDSEN around in his serving. OLDSEN for his part has slipped into the role rather successfully.

They eat for the most part in silence.

URQUHART

Danny... get the wine glasses without the stems will you?

OLDSEN

Sure... anybody for more potatoes?

VICTOR

No thanks.

MAC

No.

URQUHART shakes his head.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND FOURTEEN continued

BEN

Yes please! Some roast if you have them.

OLDSEN

Sure thing Mr Knox.

BEN

And a couple more sprouts...

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTEEN

HOTEL DOORWAY. EXTERIOR. NIGHT.

URQUHART and MAC and VICTOR are taking the charade of the evening to its logical conclusion. They are seeing BEN off at the front door as he sets off home to the beach.

URQUHART

Goodnight Ben.

BEN

Goodnight gents... thanks for the meal...

MAC

Goodnight!

The farewells are hearty and as forced as Belgian Goose pate. BEN'S whistling seems to carry clear across the bay.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTEEN

HOTEL DINING ROOM. INTERIOR. MORNING.

Breakfast time. MAC and OLDSEN and VICTOR sit at the table.

They are very solemn. Not the hearty fellows of the previous scene.

The muzak is playing. URQUHART brings the coffee pot.

MAC

Can we have the music off Gordon?

URQUHART goes into the kitchen and shortly afterwards the muzak stops.

Breakfast continues in silence.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTEEN

FERNESS. EXTERIOR. DAY.

On the jetty some of the locals are gathering for work.

The morning jet bombers fly overhead, on the way to the ranges. One of the fishermen looks up at them.

FISHERMAN

I think I'll buy one of them when we get the money... maybe a bomb too.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTEEN

BEN'S HOUSE. EXTERIOR. DAY.

MAC and URQUHART and VICTOR are at BEN again. BEN is at work outside his house, tidying up his stock-in-trade, a mass of debris from the sea; pieces of wood, whitened and smoothed, old tyres, rope, indestructible plastic containers, fishing floats gone adrift, bits of canvas.

BEN

Hello gentlemen. What's the story today?

Our trio look at each other. URQUHART takes the initiative.

URQUHART

You don't mind talking this thing through, do you Ben... I want you to see it from all points of view... there's no harm in talking is there?

BEN

Of course not Gordon.

URQUHART thinks for a moment before beginning his plea.

URQUHART

You make a living from this beach... right?

BEN

That's the case Gordon.

URQUHART steals a look at BEN'S livelihood, the pile of sea debris.

BEN maintains his dignity with silence.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTEEN continued

URQUHART

What if I told you that four hundred... five hundred people could make a living right here... if things were allowed to change?

BEN

Well, it wouldn't be the first time, would it?

URQUHART is puzzled.

URQUHART

What do you mean?

BEN

Local history Gordon... this beach used to be a good living for three hundred people... they gathered the seaweed and extracted the chemicals... big business in eighteen ten or thereabouts... this beach was turning over fifteen thousand pounds a year then... of course the Laird got most of it... and you know what happened?

URQUHART shakes his head.

BEN

After Napoleon left the scene it was cheaper to get it in the east... the trade routes were opened up again... so, goodbye Ferness beach... the business went, but the beach is still here.

URQUHART isn't sure what point BEN has actually made, but it has taken the bite out of the employment argument at any rate.

BEN

If you got the place it would be goodbye beach, wouldn't it?

BEN is in his stride now. He forces home his point.

BEN

That's when your people came her Gordon, and the rest of them... when the arse fell out of the seaweed industry... this place was just a dump then... and the landowners were throwing people off the hills to make way for the sheep... there's a lot went on here...

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTEEN continued

URQUHART has no response to this. BEN relents some.

BEN

Have an orange Gordon... I found a box on tuesday, on the rocks...

URQUHART

Yes please.

BEN gives him an orange from a box at his window. He gives one each to MAC and VICTOR also.

BEN

I found a coconut once... God knows where that came from!

MAC

What's the most amazing thing you've ever found?

BEN

Impossible to say... there's something amazing every two or three weeks... I'll let you know the next time.

URQUHART and MAC and VICTOR sit down by the fire to eat their oranges. BEN wanders off to the back of the house.

VICTOR

Do you think the Reverend should have a talk with him?

URQUHART

I don't know... I doubt if it would help.

URQUHART is studying his orange.

URQUHART

Shit, it's South African... I don't eat South African... You ever been in a jam like this before Mac?

MAC

Nope.

VICTOR

Where else have you operated?

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTEEN continued

MAC

Where else have I...?

VICTOR

What other places have you... acquired?

MAC

Bits of Central America... some Indians were sitting right on top of a shale and gas deposit... we re-settled them... they were fishermen too...

URQUHART

How did you swing that?

MAC

Did the dealing by Telex from Houston... they have regular negotiating channels down there... straight dealing with the government departments... saves problems... I didn't visit the place, but it was a good deal.

VICTOR

What about the Indians?

MAC

We built them a new village forty miles up the coast... the fishing wasn't so good there, but there was more in the way of tourism... lots of work in hotels and the like...

URQUHART and VICTOR are quite silenced by this description of social vandalism.

MAC

One of the chiefs came up to Houston for a ceremony... he was drunk for three days!

URQUHART

That's not a bad idea...

VICTOR

What, get the old man drunk?

URQUHART

No... I was thinking about us.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND NINETEEN

FERNESS BEACH. NIGHT.

The village is almost in darkness. A half moon and the light from the stars are the only illumination. And the flickering light from BEN'S fire down on the beach.

Something is afoot. First of all we see them in ones and twos and gradually we see them in greater numbers. The whole village, so it seems, is making its way quietly, very quietly, in the direction of the beach.

We see some of the men leave the hotel bar to join the movement which can only be towards BEN'S place.

Nobody speaks. There is no clear indication of what will happen when they get there. There doesn't seem to be any vocal leadership.

But any gathering of silent people on a dark night, with a solitary destination in mind, is a menacing thing.

Some of the sense of menace, or at least misgiving, is seen on the face of URQUHART. He and MAC and OLDSEN are watching the movement from outside the hotel.

VICTOR joins them. They are too apprehensive even to talk, to verbalise the question, "what do we do?"

Maybe the people are simply going to reason with BEN. After all they all know him. At the same time they know that he is the sole obstacle between them and twenty million pounds.

It soon becomes apparent that there is stealth involved in the villagers movement towards BEN'S place. This isn't a good sign.

URQUHART and MAC and VICTOR don't restrain themselves any longer. They begin to run in the direction of the crowd, which by now has reached the beach in numbers, keeping for the most part in the cover of the long machair grass on the high shore.

Nobody, least of all our trio, knows what is going to happen, or what might be done about it.

We follow URQUHART and MAC and VICTOR onto the beach, and we watch the growing tensions from their point of view.

The fundamental silence of the evening isn't broken.

BEN isn't to be seen at his fir. He is inside his shack.

The flickering fire itself seems to offer some resistence to the interlopers, as it would to a pack of wolves on the prowl.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND NINETEEN continued

MAC is probably the first to notice the light in the sky that moves instead of staying still like the others.

Gradually the thing that began as an eccentric star becomes a wildly moving object of light, the stars are now only a static backdrop to its swift movement.

More and more people notice it. It has the effect of slowing down the movement to BEN'S house, at a critical point.

The villagers stop in their tracks, by now a matter of a hundred yards from BEN'S place. Perhaps they are glad of this diversion. Reaching BEN'S house would call for some decisions having to be made, or instant actions taken.

So they stop and watch the light. It is low now, and sweeps once down the beach and out to sea, before coming inland again. The light is brighter than at first appeared.

It stops still in the sky. It turns and comes in and down towards the beach and the crowd. Then another brighter light beams from it, and the noise increases.

The chopper decides to land between BEN'S place and the crowd. BEN'S fire has probably enticed it down from the sky.

This mundane event has been endowed with all the magic and wonder of a visitation from outer space. Everyone on the beach was half-spooked anyway, high on their own potential for whatever it might have been they were up to.

Perhaps the appearance of the chopper was also the timely arrival of a dose of chastisement from on high, summoned by a collective ill-at-ease conscience.

It turns out simply to be the arrival of HAPPER, still on the run from MORITZ. But since he is here the chances are that he will put on an act of meaningful involvement in the business at hand, the acquisition of the place.

HAPPER emerges from the chopper as the blades are slowing to a stop. MAC and URQUHART and OLDSEN have come forward out of the crowd.

HAPPER addresses OLDSEN.

HAPPER

I'm travelling light Macintyre... just one bag in the luggage compartment...

He squints into the darkness at the crowd.

HAPPER

... you didn't need to lay on the reception. This is by way of an informal visit...

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND NINETEEN continued

OLDSEN seems powerless or perhaps reluctant to correct HAPPER on his mistake. They follow him as he makes his way from the chopper.

HAPPER

Since I'm here I thought we could organise a little presentation... do they need a church hall or a piano or anything? I'd like to make it a personal gift... let me know about it in the morning...

MAC remains silent as well as OLDSEN. At the moment nobody can muster a response to HAPPER'S arrival.

HAPPER talks to OLDSEN in a conspiritorial way.

HAPPER

And how about the sky Macintyre... anything going? We'll talk later... thanks for the call...

OLDSEN gives in.

OLDSEN

I'm *not* Macintyre sir...

MAC winces. It could have been handled more delicately.

HAPPER is confused, and when he gets confused he gets short tempered. He blames OLDSEN for impersonating MAC on purpose.

HAPPER

Well what's going on? Where is he? I've been on the move for twenty-four hours... I don't want to play games...

MAC comes forward, not looking much like the MACINTYRE HAPPER vaguely remembers from HOUSTON. He is unshaven and tieless.

HAPPER

Is that you Macintyre?

MAC

Yes sir.

HAPPER

Get me a room.

MAC

Yes sir... get the luggage Danny.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND NINETEEN continued

MAC manages to put a hint of reproach into his order to OLDSEN.

They make their way up from the beach to the hotel. Once they are clear of the lights of the chopper HAPPER stops to take a breath and to look at the sky. It's a reflex of his to look at the sky.

HAPPER

Good sky you have here Macintyre... well done... one or two unfamiliar things to look at up there... I like this place...the air is good, clear... get me a telescope tomorrow Macintyre... a two inch refractor will do.

Then he strides off in the direction of the hotel. MAC turns to OLDSEN who is following with the baggage.

MAC

Here that? I want a two inch refractor... for tomorrow.

URQUHART

Ben's got a telescope... it's bigger than two inches though... it's about this long... and this thick...

He describes an object the size of a four inch mortar.

MAC

Jesus, Ben's got this whole place sewn up hasn't he...

They wander off up the path. The people on the beach start to disperse. We overhear a snatch of conversation.

VILLAGE LADY

Come on Fiona... I don't think we're going to kill Ben tonight after all.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY

HOTEL DINING ROOM. INTERIOR. MORNING.

HAPPER has pride of place at the breakfast sitting. He is at a separate table with MAC, who looks not so much like a fellow diner as a hired food taster, on the verge of getting the scrambled egg and deadly nightshade.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY continued

OLDSEN and VICTOR and ANDERSON, the chopper pilot, are at another table. URQUHART waits on them all.

MAC is attempting to brief HAPPER. Not an easy job, and not just because MAC'S own feelings about the place and the deal are becoming confused. Briefing HAPPER is like tutoring a four year old child. His attention is apt to wander where it may, and teacher has to follow instead of lead.

HAPPER

I'll offer him the piano, if he's the problem.

MAC

We've tried most things sir.

HAPPER

You try a piano?

MAC

No... we tried one and a half million dollars... I don't know if he plays the piano.

HAPPER

And he owns the whole beach?

MAC

Yes. It's been in the Knox family for over four hundred years.

HAPPER

Knox?

MAC

Ben Knox.

HAPPER responds with a stony stare. A stare that blames MAC for BEN having the one name that has been grating inside HAPPER'S head for fifty years.

MAC

I'm sorry sir. It's his name.

HAPPER

Since I'm here, I'll talk to him... what's he like?

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY continued

MAC

Kind of eccentric sir... he roams the beach. He has an interest in the stars too.

This perks HAPPER up.

MAC

In fact he has a telescope... about this big. He knows the sky around here like the back of his hand.

HAPPER

I'll talk to him.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-ONE

FERNESS BEACH. DAY.

MAC is walking HAPPER in the direction of BEN'S house. The others are watching from a discreet distance. HAPPER is striding briskly, not out of a sense of purpose but because he has longish legs. MAC'S shorter ones oblige him to trot at HAPPER'S side.

MAC is priming him for the encounter, like a boxing coach.

MAC

He has this trick he does with sand sir... if he offers you anything to do with sand say yes... and we'll get him to sign something right away...

HAPPER

Sand?

MAC

Yes sir... anything up to about half a bucket full... say yes...

The others come onto the beach, still keeping their distance.

HAPPER

He wants to sell me the sand?

MAC

No sir... you'll get the drift if he does it.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-ONE continued

HAPPER

Don't worry Macintyre... I have a plan... I'm going to offer him a telescope... a big one.

MAC

Well good luck sir.

They are nearing BEN'S place. BEN is not to be seen. They slow down. MAC goes ahead to BEN'S window, HAPPER hovering slightly behind him.

MAC taps on the window.

MAC

Ben! It's Mac again!

The window opens. BEN puts his head out.

BEN

Good morning Mr Mac.

MAC motions to HAPPER to come forward.

MAC

Ben, this is Mr Happer. He would like to talk with you.

HAPPER is formal and patronising in his greeting. He doesn't meet strangers very often and is out of practice.

HAPPER

Delighted to meet you sir!

BEN hasn't been up long and is still getting his bearings. He looks at HAPPER and then at MAC. He doesn't speak.

MAC has to keep things going. HAPPER seems to have made as many moves as he is prepared to.

MAC

Mr Happer has come from America like me.

HAPPER awkwardly comes forward and offers his hand to BEN through the open window. BEN takes it.

BEN

You better come in Mr Happer, if you've come that far.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-ONE continued

MAC indicates to HAPPER that he has to enter by way of the window. MAC gets the orange box to use as a step.

HAPPER clambers in, with support from MAC, and the odd shove.

It is not a very dignified business.

Once inside HAPPER looks back out at MAC.

HAPPER

That's all in the time being Macintyre.

MAC

Yes sir.

MAC backs away from the window. He walks off to join URQUHART and OLDSEN and VICTOR, who are some way off.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-TWO

BEACH. DAY.

The chopper still sits on the beach. The Pilot is checking it, unhooking the rotor restraints, cleaning the canopy.

A couple of the locals are watching him. It's the same two who were on the jetty watching the bombers earlier. They obviously have an interest in aviation. After watching the pilot for a while one of them speaks.

FISHERMAN

How much would one of these be costing?

The pilot doesn't stop his work to answer.

ANDERSON

About quarter of a million pounds, with all the trimmings, and full avionics.

The two locals inch their way forward, touching the machine.

FISHERMAN

Is there any place for bombs?

ANDERSON

Not really. There's a hard point on the fuselage bottom, but it's really for a winch. I suppose it could take a small bomb or two.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-TWO continued

FISHERMAN

It would be cheaper than one of those jets?

ANDERSON

Sure would... they're fetching twenty million apiece nowadays. There's big money in war.

FISHERMAN

Where could I buy one? Would you sell this?

ANDERSON

This one belongs to the man in there...

He points towards BEN'S house.

ANDERSON

But I could put you in touch with the agents. It's made in America. They have brochures...

FISHERMAN

I'll think about it.

ANDERSON

Have a look inside... don't touch anything red or yellow...

FISHERMAN

Thanks.

The FISHERMEN gingerly climb into the cabin of the chopper, wide-eyed like kids.

They toy with the more innocent-looking of the knobs and levers

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-THREE

FERNESS BEACH. DAY

URQUHART and MAC and OLDSEN and VICTOR are still waiting on the beach. Time has passed. They are sitting on some rocks, apart from URQUHART, who paces up and down, slowly.

In the middle distance is BEN'S house. Smoke now rises from his chimney.

MAC addresses OLDSEN

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-THREE continued

MAC

Go and see if they're still laughing.

OLDSEN trots off closer to BEN'S house. He stops a few yards from it to listen. We stay in a wide shot, keeping the point of view of the others.

A head appears at the window. OLDSEN moves closer to the house. After a few moments he nods and trots back to join the group.

MAC

What happened?

OLDSEN

They want some whisky... and Ben wants some beef sandwiches with mustard and no salt.

MAC

Did Happer say anything?

OLDSEN

He doesn't want any mustard... just salt.

MAC

Nothing else happen?

OLDSEN

I asked if they needed water for the whisky, but...

MAC

Ok, ok...

URQUHART moves off back to the hotel.

URQUHART

Stay cool Mac... it's a good sign.

VICTOR

Bring some brandy back with you Gordon.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FOUR

FERNESS BEACH. DAY.

The little procession of URQUHART and STELLA makes its way from the hotel to BEN'S house. URQUHART carries a tray with the sandwiches and whisky bottle. STELLA follows with the glasses and the water jug, and a bottle of brandy which she throws to VICTOR as she passes the others sitting on the rocks.

STELLA and URQUHART pass the food and drink through the window, and then they rejoin the group.

URQUHART has some paper cups. VICTOR pours everyone some brandy.

MAC

Slange everybody!

Everyone returns the Gaelic toast to MAC

STELLA addresses MAC.

STELLA

Gordon told me about your offer Mac, to swap lives... I told him it was fine by me...

MAC

Thanks Stella... it's good to have your support.

URQUHART keeps the joke going.

URQUHART

Got the keys for the Porsche Mac?

MAC smiles, and lets the joke rest on him.

MAC

I'll give you some hot telephone numbers too Gordon, before you leave...

Just then a very hearty laugh issues from BEN'S house. After a short pause there is another bout of laughing from two voices.

This unsettles MAC. The thought of HAPPER laughing is alien to him. The idea of HAPPER connecting with someone like BEN is almost unthinkable.

MAC

Jesus, what's going on in there?

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FOUR continued

VICTOR

Sounds like they're buddies.

One of the locals comes up to join the group. It is the aviation-minded fisherman.

FISHERMAN

Any news about the money Gordon?

URQUHART

Nothing yet Malcolm. Have a spot of brandy.

VICTOR pours him a paper cupful.

Everyone's attention drifts back to BEN'S house, the smoke still curling from its chimney.

VICTOR

Maybe Happer'll give us a smoke signal when he clinches it...

The brandy has gone down far enough for most of them to have a bit of a laugh at this.

URQUHART

It's white smoke for a nope isn't it?

They laugh some more.

MAC

This is the life for me!

MAC is enjoying himself. He looks around the place with a kind of contentment.

MAC

Hey, it's quiet today... I wonder what happened to the bombers...

OLDSEN

Happer fixed them. The pilot told me... he told Happer it was a dangerous flying zone here, so Happer phoned London, then... no bombers...

VICTOR

They'll be frightening somebody else's sheep today.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FOUR continued

OLDSEN

Hey look!

OLDSEN has spotted some movement at BEN'S place. From the group's point of view we see BEN and HAPPER clambering out of the window.

Once BEN and HAPPER are out of the house, having helped each other negotiate the drop to the ground, they start to walk away from the house and in the opposite direction from our group.

HAPPER turns around and waves at MAC and the others. BEN joins in the waving.

MAC waves back in a rather vacant way. He is trying to figure out what is going on. The others wave too.

Then HAPPER and BEN wander off along the beach in the direction of the cliffs. They are getting on well. Even from a distance we can see BEN pointing out local features and HAPPER responding amiably.

VICTOR

Happer's either a genius or...

MAC

He's a nut.

They all turn to look at MAC.

MAC

He's a nut... I'm telling you.

OLDSEN gets indignant on HAPPER'S behalf.

OLDSEN

Come on Mac... he is the top man...

MAC

He's a nut... he shouldn't be allowed to walk the streets never mind run a petro-chemical corporation... what am I saying... he never walks the streets.

VICTOR

He's only human.

They watch the billionaire and the beachcomber as they recede into the far distance of the cliff edge, their eager conversation still visible in their gesticulations.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIVE continued

FERNESS JETTY. DAY.

Time has passed. MAC and URQUHART and OLDSEN are still keeping watch on the beach and BEN'S place. Most of the locals are attempting to get on with their work, but keep a weather eye open at the same time.

VICTOR comes out of the hotel and crosses the road to join the others on the jetty.

VICTOR

They still inside?

OLDSEN

They've been back for an hour. Happer was carrying a whole pile of wood...

We settle on a point of view shot of BEN'S house. After a few moments a figure emerges from the window and starts to walk in the direction of the jetty. It is HAPPER.

MAC sets off at once to meet him. OLDSEN follows hard on the heels of MAC.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SIX

FERNESS BEACH. DAY.

MAC and OLDSEN meet HAPPER on the beach, half-way between BEN'S place and the jetty.

HAPPER is a changed man. Apart from the dirt and sand and seawater stains on his nine hundred dollar suit, and the effect of two or three loud whiskies and fresh sea air, he seems to have changed within himself. He smiles more for a start, and some of the formality in his manner has gone. The overall effect is to make him seem younger than before.

There is also an apologetic tone in his manner with MAC, underneath his new-found serenity, almost as if he wants to apologise for not being the HAPPER he was before.

HAPPER

Hellow Macintyre.

MAC

How did it go sir?

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SIX continued

HAPPER chooses his words carefully, as if trying to back off from the decisions that he is making, feeling his way into his new attitudes.

HAPPER

Fine. I think we have a lot of re-thinking to go. We have a job to do here but I think the refinery idea was on the wrong track... Ben's been filling me in... this place has a lot to offer... Ben has eight unplotted objects in this very sky right above us... we're gonna start the scan tonight...

HAPPER'S about turn forces MAC to behave like an oil man again, against his own better nature, but he reacts out of executive instinct.

MAC

The acquisition is at a pretty advanced stage sir...

HAPPER

I want the place Macintyre... don't get me wrong... but tell Crabbe to re-think the refinery site... when you see him... tomorrow.

HAPPER lets himself get carried away.

HAPPER

I see a kind of institute here... a place of study and research... an observatory to begin with... optical and radio telescopes ... then we could branch out...

OLDSEN chimes in

OLDSEN

The sea sir... this is a natural place for a marine laboratory... we've already prepared some data at the Aberdeen Lab...the North Atlantic Drift comes right in here... all kinds of things fetch up here... from all over the world!

HAPPER

Sea and sky... I like it... we could do some good work here...

OLDSEN

You could call it the Happer Institute Sir...

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SIX continued

HAPPER thinks about it.

HAPPER

You might be right... it might be the name for it... it says it all... write it down... good thinking...

HAPPER searches for his name.

OLDSEN

Oldsen sir.

HAPPER

You stay here with me Oldsen... we have a lot to do... Macintyre, Crabbe is going to need you right away... take the chopper back to Aberdeen and get over to Houston... tell Crabbe to start thinking along the lines of an off-shore establishment, just for storage... and a refinery nearer the markets.

MAC

Tonight sir?

HAPPER

The sooner the better. And have a shave Macintyre.

Events are moving too quickly for MAC. He makes an attempt to catch up.

MAC

What's the sea laboratory thing Danny... you didn't tell em about it?

OLDSEN

I've just been piecing it together recently... some of Geddes's people were working on it... remember the girl?

MAC

Oh yeh... the girl.

HAPPER

You better get moving Macintyre... I'm glad I got here in time to stop the refinery caper.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SIX continued

HAPPER guides OLDSEN away from MAC. They walk off along the beach together. MAC is left alone.

HAPPER

Oldsen, get my overcoat and fix up some food for later... Ben and I will be full time on the telescope tonight...

OLDSEN

Yes Mister Happer.

HAPPER

I could grow to love this place.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SEVEN

HOTEL BAR. INTERIOR DAY.

MAC has packed. He is alone in the bar with URQUHART. MAC has reverted to his formal business suit, and looks just the same as he did when he arrived in FERNESS.

The conversation between MAC and URQUHART is stilted and awkward. Things have happened too quickly for both of them.

URQUHART is preparing MAC'S hotel bill.

URQUHART

You don't really have to pay Mac... I could stick it on the Knox tab... anyway it's been fun having you...

MAC

No I'll pay. I want to.

URQUHART

Ok... if it's a cheque make it out to Stella B Urquhart...

MAC

Stella

URQUHART

She's the boss.

MAC begins to write his cheque.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SEVEN continued

MAC

This is an American bank account Gordon... it might not be valid here...

URQUHART

Don't worry... we'll stick it on the wall for a souvenir.

MAC

I hope things work out ok with Happer...

URQUHART

I think we can handle it... it's always the same... the big boys want the playground all to themselves...

MAC

At least there'll be work around the place... and money.

URQUHART

Yeh... work and money... it'll be ok.

MAC

Well... so long.

They shake hands.

URQUHART

You should say goodbye to Stella. She's upstairs...

MAC tries to be offhand about it.

MAC

Oh no... it doesn't matter...

URQUHART is insistent.

URQUHART

Go and see her Mac...

The more URQUHART insists the more MAC backs off.

MAC

You say toodle-loo for me Gordon... well... toodle-loo to you too...

They shake hands again.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-EIGHT

FERNESS BEACH. DAY.

The chopper blades are already turning, and MAC is making his way down to the beach to board it.

URQUHART and STELLA and VICTOR and the others have come out to say farewell to him.

HAPPER is not there. He is back down on the beach with BEN.

There is more the feeling that MAC is being dismissed than simply leaving. A certain restraint, almost a gloom, hangs in the air.

OLDSEN is not around to say goodbye.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-NINE

CLIFF BEACH. DAY.

OLDSEN is down on the beach looking for MARINA. He seems to know where she will be, or perhaps she is good at making him come to her.

MARINA is in the water, in some shallows near the shore.

When OLDSEN calls her she wades on a few yards and rests on a rock in the water. She is wearing her sea suit.

OLDSEN

Marina! It worked! The Lab! It'll happen!

MARINA only smiles. She doesn't make any effort to get nearer to OLDSEN. He is on the pebble beach, she is some way offshore. All she does is smile.

OLDSEN

I told him about the plans... it's going to happen!

OLDSEN'S excitement makes him want to be closer to the girl.

She sits on her rock smiling. So OLDSEN starts to wade out to join her. He enters the water without taking off any clothing or his shoes.

He is about half way towards her and the water is lapping at his waist. We keep our shots from the point of view of the shoreline. OLDSEN gets closer to MARINA, and the water gets deeper.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY

FERNESS BEACH. DAY.

MAC is in the chopper and it is revving up for the lift-off.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-ONE

CHOPPER INTERIOR/AERIAL SHOTS.

We are inside the chopper as it lifts off and quickly gains altitude.

Along with MAC we see the receding image of the bay and the village.

One continuous shot takes us from a relatively close view of the bay to a distant high shot.

Gradually wisps of cloud start to curl around the edges of the image.

As the chopper gains more height we begin to see FERNESS through a neat hole in the surrounding clouds.

The figures on the beach and on the jetty are by now just so many insignificant dots of movement.

The bay is like a model now, an unreal place. The colours of the beach and the sea seem like toytown colours.

Then the hole in the clouds closes over, and the image is gone forever.

As the vision of FERNESS vanishes we are suddenly back in the real world with MAC. The static chatter of the air traffic in his headphones becomes the dominant sound. The chopper noise mixes with it. The magic is gone.

MAC is simply an oil executive on the way to make a flight connection, suspended above the clouds for a few minutes of a busy day.

ANDERSON the pilot checks in with ABERDEEN to announce their imminent arrival.

ANDERSON

Aberdeen Approach... this is Golf Yankee Yankee at flight level four five estimating the zone at three zero...

Control answers.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-ONE continued

CONTROL

Roger Yankee Yankee... listen out on Scottish one two four decimal nine... call approach on entering the zone... out.

The chopper throbs its way across the country that is lost from sight.

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-TWO

HOUSTON TEXAS. MAC'S APARTMENT. NIGHT. INTERIOR.

MAC is home. He is in the state of limbo that coming home to a closed-down house always is.

MAC is still wearing his lightweight raincoat as he starts to re-occupy his space. He moves around the apartment, almost sniffing it out. He switches on lights and checks the air conditioning.

He goes into the kitchen to check the freezer. While there he picks up an empty clean fruit jar.

Back in the lounge he opens his suitcase and takes out his bag-ful of shells and pebbles from FERNESS.

He puts a careful selection of his treasures into the jar and places it on the table.

Then he makes a telephone call. As he dials the number he walks with the telephone to the balcony. He opens the glass doors as he waits for his connection.

Beyond the balcony are the lights of HOUSTON. Mac feels in his pockets and extracts a handful of polaroid photo snaps. Tucking the phone under his chin, he pins the snaps to his workboard on the wall, a kind of multi-media diary of scribbled notes, timetables and photgraphs.

There is a photograph of STELLA and URQUHART. There is a photograph of OLDSEN and MAC. There is a photograph of FERNESS BEACH itself. They join the snaps of the Porsche, and TRUDI and CAL.

MAC makes his connection.

MAC

Hello... Lester? It's Mac... I'm back... is the car ready?

The images of HOUSTON from MAC'S balcony, the lights and the endless traffic movement, are like a show, a kind of

SCENE ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-TWO continued

ballet of light with its own backdrop, dedicated to the Petro-Chemical Age.

There are no visible stars in the sky. The polaroid images of FERNESS and URQUHART and STELLA might last a year or two, in the harsh Texas light.

THE END

Bill Forsyth
GLASGOW

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